

OXFORD STUDIES IN BYZANTIUM

Writing and Reading  
Byzantine Secular Poetry,  
1025–1081

FLORIS BERNARD



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FLORIS BERNARD

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The result of this work, a doctoral dissertation, is what it is: part of a learning process. Its mistakes and oversights are numerous, and the decision to write it in English has made it appear yet more garbled and imperfect than it already was. An institutionally required 'publication' on the internet has given it more exposure than expected; I hope it will from now on be safely ignored in favour of the present book.



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and my wife Elisabeth. This book is dedicated to the memory of Chrisje De Pauw, who was for many years secretary of the Department of Classics at Ghent University. Her legendary optimism, patience, and kindness of heart are precious gifts for which we will always be thankful.

*Washington DC,  
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## List of Abbreviations

- BMGS = *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*  
Byz = *Byzantion*  
ByzSl = *Byzantinoslavica*  
BZ = *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*  
Christophoros = *Die Gedichte des Christophoros Mitylenaios*, ed. E. Kurtz (Leipzig 1903)  
DOP = *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*  
JÖB = *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik*  
LBG = E. Trapp e.a., *Lexikon zur Byzantinischen Gräzität, besonders des 9.–12. Jahrhunderts* (Vienna 2001–)  
Mauroπος = P. de Lagarde (ed.), *Iohannis Euchaitorum Metropolitanæ quæ in Codice Vaticano Graeco 676 supersunt* (Göttingen 1882)  
Mauroπος, Ep. = A. Karpozilos (ed.), *The Letters of Ioannes Mauroπος Metropolitan of Euchaita* (Thessaloniki 1990)  
NE = *Νέος Έλληνομνήμων*  
ODB = A. Kazhdan (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. 3 vols. (Oxford 1991)  
PG = J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Graeca*. 161 vols. (Paris 1857–1866)  
Psellos = L. G. Westerink (ed.), *Michael Psellus. Poemata* (Stuttgart/Leipzig 1992)  
Psellos, *Chronographia* = *Michele Psello. Imperatori di Bisanzio (Cronografia)*, ed. S. Impellizzeri; introd. D. Del Corno; comm. U. Criscuolo; trans. S. Ronchey (Milan 1984, 2005<sup>3</sup>)  
Psellos, Ep. K-D = *Michaelis Pselli Scripta minora*, ed. E. Kurtz and F. Drexel, vol. II. *Epistulae* (Milan 1941)  
Psellos, Ep. Sathas = K. Sathas (ed.), *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη* (Venice/Paris 1876), vol. V.



- Psellos, *Or. fun. Gautier* = P. Gautier, 'Monodies inédites de Michel Psellos', *REB* 36 (1978), 82–151
- Psellos, *Or. fun. in Leich.* = Michael Psellos, *Oratio funebris in Constantinum Leichoudem*, ed. K. Sathas, *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη* (Venice/Paris 1876), vol. IV, 388–421
- Psellos, *Or. fun. in Nicetam* = Michael Psellos, *Oratio funebris in Nicetam*, ed. A. M. Guglielmino, 'Un maestro di grammatica a Bisanzio nell'XI secolo e l'epitafio per Niceta di Michele Psello', *SicGymn* 27 (1974), 421–63
- Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.* = Michael Psellos, *Oratio funebris in Ioannem Xiphilinum*, ed. K. Sathas, *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη* (Venice/Paris 1876), vol. IV, 421–62
- Psellos, *Or. min.* = *Michaelis Pselli Oratoria minora*, ed. A. Littlewood (Leipzig 1985)
- Psellos, *Or. pan.* = *Michael Psellus. Orationes panegyricae*, ed. G. T. Dennis (Leipzig/Stuttgart 1998)
- REB = *Revue des études byzantines*
- SicGymn = *Siculorum Gymnasium*
- TM = *Travaux et Mémoires*

## *Note to the Reader*

I have chosen not to anglicize personal names of people living in the medieval Byzantine empire: hence, for example, Ioannes Mauropous instead of John Mauropous. All translations are mine unless indicated otherwise.



# 1

---

## Introduction

### 1.1. BUILDING A BRIDGE

One of the most exciting events in eleventh-century Constantinople must have been the horse races. Even Christophoros Mitylenaios could not escape the lure of this spectacular sport. It so happened that, on one particular day when horse races were being held, some of his friends were away in the countryside. They were, quite naturally, burning with curiosity to find out how the race went. For their convenience, Christophoros composed a profuse piece of poetic sports journalism (poem 90). This is the introduction to the poem:

*Πρὸς τοὺς ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ ἀπόντας φίλους, ἵπποδρομίας ἀγομῆνης  
ἀπολειφθέντας καὶ ἀξιώσαντας μανθάνειν τὰ περὶ αὐτῆς*

*Ὅπως μὲν εἶχεν ἱππικὸν τὸ χθές, φίλοι,  
ποιούς δὲ τοὺς ἀγῶνας εὔρε τοῦ δρόμου,  
ἀποῦσι καὶ θέλουσι μανθάνειν γράφω,  
ποιῶν ὑμῖν ἕκαστα δῆλα πρὸς μέρος,  
ὡς ἂν γε καὶ δόξητε, φίλτατοι φίλων, 5  
ὡς ἐκ κατόπτρου τῶν παρόντων μου λόγων  
τῷ χθές θεάτρῳ συμπαρεῖναι τοῦ δρόμου  
(...) ὥσπερ ἐμφανεστάτως  
τοὺς τέσσαρας βλέποντες ἄρματῆλάτας*

*To his friends who were out of town, and, having missed the horse race that  
had been held, had asked to be told about it*

*How yesterday's horse events unfolded, my friends,  
and which chariot races took place,  
I now write to you who are away and want to hear about it.  
I will make everything clear for you in detail  
so that you, my dearest friends, will have the impression, 5  
as from the mirror of my present words,*

*of being present at yesterday's spectacle in the hippodrome  
 (...) very clearly  
 seeing the four chariot drivers.*

Christophoros' poem will act as a faithful mirror, making his friends feel that they were really present at the horse race of 'yesterday'. They only need to look into the mirror of his words to imagine the race in their mind's eye. The impression is thus created that this poem was written and read on one particular day, the day after the races, since the race day is referred to as  $\chi\theta\acute{\epsilon}\varsigma$  ('yesterday'). But the poem is, of course, not intended only for Christophoros' friends. As a poet of some repute, Christophoros must have known he was in fact writing for a wider public. The indication  $\chi\theta\acute{\epsilon}\varsigma$  need not be taken literally, but rather as a device to heighten the liveliness of this poetic sports report. Nevertheless, the poem expects of its readers that they can imagine the  $\chi\theta\acute{\epsilon}\varsigma$  as the day before their reading, and that they can imagine themselves in the place of Christophoros' friends. They can look into the mirror of Christophoros' 'present words' and 'see' the races.

But can this mirror still work for us, at such a distance from the Constantinople of Christophoros and his friends? Can we still imagine the  $\chi\theta\acute{\epsilon}\varsigma$  of the poem as the day before the day we read this poem, and conjure up the races in our minds? The cultural gap between us, modern readers, and the world the poem evokes may simply be too great: we are not able to relive the thrill of an eleventh-century Constantinopolitan horse race, to become emotionally involved with all the details about the control of the reins, the turmoil when the corners were taken, the unexpected twists in the course of the race. To make things worse, Christophoros' mirror is also literally broken: the manuscript transmitting the poem is so badly damaged that about half the verses can no longer be read. We cannot even establish which colour won the race that day. The mirror of Christophoros' poem, to use an image familiar to Byzantinists, is distorting not only because it presents reality through unfamiliar rhetorical patterns,<sup>1</sup> but also because not all words are 'present' any more. The  $\chi\theta\acute{\epsilon}\varsigma$  in the poem, that particular day in the eleventh century, belongs now to a past we can no longer retrieve.

This double loss of connection with the world of the poem is indicative of the problems that haunt us when we try to read

<sup>1</sup> C. Mango, *Byzantine Literature as a Distorting Mirror* (Oxford 1975).

Byzantine poetry. Notwithstanding all our laments about the sterility of Byzantine poetry, this poem shows us a world of living experience, popular events, and curious readers. Yet readership of this poetry nowadays is confined to professional scholars, and even these professional scholars still feel the need to justify their occupation with these texts. Byzantinists are still struggling to win acceptance for the idea, self-evident in other domains, that their texts deserve to be studied and explained.

In recent decades, most scholars of Byzantine literature have finally left the traditional approach, which, as has been amply noted by now,<sup>2</sup> did not regard Byzantine literature as literature, but predominantly approached it as a potential (but unreliable) source from which to extract historical information. As to its literary merits, it was seen merely as an artificial and lifeless imitation of ancient literature, and, as such, it was bound to fall short of modern aesthetic expectations. By contrast, scholars now profess that they study this literature ‘as literature’, and they do their utmost to prove that this poetry is worth studying. But these rehabilitations of Byzantine poetry often employ exactly the same (romantic) presuppositions that influenced the traditional scholarly readings: that poetry deserving of the name should contain sensitivity, originality, and experience taken from real life.<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to leave behind (or to recognize as modern) the aesthetic principles underlying our reading strategies. And thus, while Margaret Mullett stated some time ago that ‘it is questionable whether Byzantine literature is best served in the 1990s by such a primitively evaluative approach’,<sup>4</sup> one may still observe that the study of Byzantine literature is in the position where it has to justify the choice of its subject.

Poetry of the eleventh century, in this respect, has not fared better than poetry of other periods in Byzantium. It may be fairly said that it

<sup>2</sup> M. Mullett, ‘New Literary History and the History of Byzantine Literature: A Worthwhile Endeavour?’, in: P. Odorico and P. Agapitos (eds), *Pour une «nouvelle» histoire de la littérature byzantine. Actes du colloque international philologique. Nicosie, 25–28 mai 2000* (Paris 2002), 37–60. See also M. Vinson, ‘Rhetoric and Writing Strategies in the Ninth Century’, in: E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Rhetoric in Byzantium* (Aldershot 2003), 9–22, here 9–10.

<sup>3</sup> P. Agapitos, ‘*Η θέση της αισθητικής αποτίμησης σε μια νέα ιστορία της βυζαντινής λογοτεχνίας*’, in: Odorico and Agapitos, *Pour une nouvelle histoire*, 185–232, esp. 185–7, helpfully points out these modern aesthetic assumptions.

<sup>4</sup> M. Mullett, ‘Dancing With Deconstructionists in the Gardens of the Muses: New Literary History vs?’, *BMGS* 14 (1990), 258–75, here at 261.

is even less explored than tenth- and twelfth-century poetry. In itself quite considerable in quantity, it received no more than two and a half pages in Hunger's magisterial *Handbuch*.<sup>5</sup> The few translations and commentaries that do exist fall outside the focus of international scholarship.<sup>6</sup> This is all the more remarkable since the poetry especially of Christophoros and Mauropous sometimes received appreciation for its vividness and wit.<sup>7</sup>

There may be several reasons for this lack of serious engagement with eleventh-century poetry.<sup>8</sup> It cannot claim to contain the seeds of modern Greek literature, for which twelfth-century poetry is so important. Neither is it as narrowly connected to Antiquity as some ninth- and tenth-century poetry. Thus, deprived of an affinity with either Antiquity or Modernity, separated from the developments in the West (although undoubtedly sometimes running parallel to them), and apparently not imitated in other cultural spheres, poetry of the eleventh century is part of what can be described as a 'dead end'.

The problem of the confrontation of our modern aesthetic experience with medieval texts has been taken up in depth by Hans Robert Jauss.<sup>9</sup> Such an experience, according to Jauss, can only reach its full potential if the modern reader takes a step back from his first reaction of pleasure or displeasure, and reflects upon this experience to become aware of the distinctive 'otherness' (*Alterität*) of medieval texts.

<sup>5</sup> H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner* (Munich 1978), II, 169–71.

<sup>6</sup> The translations and studies of Mauropous and Christophoros by Rosario Anastasi, Carmelo Crimi, and their team, which appeared in Sicily in the 80s and 90s, are unfortunately not widely used. C. Crimi, *Cristoforo di Mitilene. Canzoniere*. With the collaboration of R. Anastasi, R. Gentile, A. Milazzo, G. Musumeci, and M. Solarino (Catania 1983) is the only existing running commentary and translation of Christophoros' poetry, and R. Anastasi (trans.), *Giovanni Mauropode, metropolita di Euchaita, Canzoniere* (Catania 1984) remains the only complete translation of Mauropous' poetry. Christopher Livanos and myself are now preparing a translation of Mauropous and Christophoros for the Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library series.

<sup>7</sup> On welcome wittiness in Christophoros' poems, see e.g. P. Maas, 'Review of: E. Kurtz (ed.), *Die Gedichte des Christophoros Mitylenaios*', *BZ* 15 (1906), 639–41, here at 639; praise for the lack of rhetoric ballast in Mauropous' poetry: Hunger, *Hochsprachliche*, II, 171.

<sup>8</sup> F. Bernard and K. Demoen, 'Giving a Small Taste. Introduction', in: F. Bernard and K. Demoen (eds), *Poetry and its Contexts in Eleventh-century Byzantium* (Farnham/Burlington 2012), 3–15.

<sup>9</sup> H. R. Jauss, 'Alterität und Modernität der mittelalterlichen Literatur', in: *Alterität und Modernität der mittelalterlichen Literatur: Gesammelte Aufsätze 1956–1976* (Munich 1977), 9–47.

We then recognize that our horizon of expectation, determined by a set of ingrained presuppositions, has no universal value. By reconstructing a medieval horizon of expectations (which can only remain, of course, a reconstruction, as Jauss emphasizes), we can come a step closer to a better understanding of the text's original meaning and reception, and extract a possible meaning, as we are forced to revise our own horizon of expectations. Even if we still cannot enjoy these texts, we will be able, thanks to this reconstruction, to build a hermeneutic bridge to an alien world.<sup>10</sup> But in this process we have to discard, with some effort, the very tenets of our thinking about literature. So we have to put into perspective the concept of a literary work (*Werk*) as a singular product of a creator devoted to artistic ideals, and take distance from some deep-rooted distinctions, such as those between didactic and fictional, purposeful and purposeless ('*zweckbestimmt oder zweckfrei*'), etc., oppositions in which the second term of each pair is for us an indicator of 'literariness'.<sup>11</sup>

I believe that Jauss' insistence on the impact of these very different 'horizons of expectation' can prevent us from imposing our own expectations and concepts when approaching Byzantine literature. This may go as far as to question the very names we use to label these texts: namely 'literature' and 'poetry'. These presuppose certain aesthetic expectations that may be frustrated when we are confronted with Byzantine poetry, and hence may hinder an objective view of these texts and their aesthetics. This book aims to critically reconsider such assumptions, and to initiate a quest for the expectations and assumptions held by the Byzantine authors and readers, a need that has been recognized by other scholars as well.<sup>12</sup> Hence, I will pay close attention to the discourse used by the Byzantines themselves when they dealt with what we call 'literature'.

Another problem that I believe is inherent in the field of Byzantine literary studies is the one-sided approach to the act of interpreting texts. It has long been taken for granted that the interpreter's task is to 'decode' a single message enclosed in the text. This message is always believed to be obfuscated by thick layers of rhetoric. It is this operation of decoding that is endemic to almost every modern scholarly reading of Byzantine texts. Starting from the observation that these

<sup>10</sup> Jauss, 'Alterität', 13.

<sup>11</sup> Jauss, 15.

<sup>12</sup> M. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres. Texts and Contexts*, vol. 1 (Vienna 2003), 26 and Agapitos, 'H θέση'.



texts were full of rhetoric, it was (and is) customary to scrape off the layers of rhetoric and *topoi*, to arrive at a message that is sincere and true—and, ideally, slightly subversive. It is, of course, salutary not to take texts too literally; Byzantine texts seldom transmit straightforward messages.<sup>13</sup> But on the other hand, this can easily lead to over-interpretation, ignoring that rhetoric for the Byzantines was not necessarily a way to obfuscate a message, but simply the most appropriate way to communicate.<sup>14</sup>

It is the goal of this book, rather than interpreting texts, to describe the contexts in which meaning and meaning-giving are produced.<sup>15</sup> It intends to chart the conventions and the interpretive strategies with which a reading community approaches a text. What we need to look at, therefore, are the reading assumptions held by Byzantine readers of poetry. What were they paying attention to when they read poetry? How did they come into contact with poetry in the first place, and how did the medium of reading impact their experience? Who is this reading public, and how large is it? Complete answers to these questions are, of course, impossible. Yet, by examining the material remains (that is, the manuscripts), or by observing how the texts themselves anticipate contemporary readings, we may piece together some tendencies.

Another concern of this book is the relationship between society and poetry. It has been the merit of Alexander Kazhdan and others to pull Byzantine texts out of a kind of immanent timeless sphere of philological textuality, and to situate them in their historical context.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, Kazhdan set about the task of interpreting Byzantine texts as dots in the matrix of social and ideological forces exerting influence on the author. The most systematic application of this undertaking is probably his study ‘The social views of Michael Attaleiates’, where he attempts to locate Attaleiates between the

<sup>13</sup> J. Ljubarskij, ‘How Should a Byzantine Text Be Read?’, in: E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, 117–25.

<sup>14</sup> G. Kustas, *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric* (Thessaloniki 1973), 1; on interpretive strategies towards Byzantine rhetoric, see M. Mullett, ‘Rhetoric, Theory, and the Imperative of Performance: Byzantium and Now’, in: E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, 151–70, esp. 158.

<sup>15</sup> Compare S. Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Mass. 1980); J. Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs. Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Ithaca, NY 1981).

<sup>16</sup> See especially A. Kazhdan, ‘Der Mensch in der byzantinischen Literaturgeschichte’, *JÖB* 28 (1979), 1–21.

various ideological movements of late eleventh-century Byzantium.<sup>17</sup> He did the same for Mauropous, albeit within a more restrained scope.<sup>18</sup> It can be said that this kind of study primarily saw the relationship between text and society as ‘reflective’: a text duly reflected the author’s ideological stance and social background.<sup>19</sup>

These historicist interpretations run the risk of underestimating the impact of genre. When Mauropous portrays an emperor overcome with remorse, this is seen as scathing critique, without taking into consideration the genre of *katanyktic* poems.<sup>20</sup> Christophoros’ poem 55, requesting a promotion, is considered as a reflection of the liberal cultural policies of Monomachos, an interpretation which ignores the conventions of requests and petitions.<sup>21</sup> In this respect, Margaret Mullett’s study ‘The Madness of Genre’ has done much to reconsider the formative power of genre.<sup>22</sup> Instead of using genre to carve up the mass of texts and establish false continuities, Mullett’s concept of genre looked at the intersection between immediate occasion and inherited forms.

Interpretations that take a text to ‘reflect’ a given social force are also prone to underestimate the possibly manipulative and misleading aspects of texts. These texts defended interests; they did not seek to provide a historical record for us. Instead of reflecting a social background, they sometimes wanted to change the social positions of the authors, or to carve out new social positions. The ‘apologetic’ and self-representative aspects of Psellos’ works are now beginning to be seriously studied,<sup>23</sup> and I think that this track should also be pursued for his poetry and that of his contemporaries.

In any case, a more nuanced view of the relationship of a text to society would be welcome. For medieval texts, Gabrielle Spiegel has

<sup>17</sup> A. Kazhdan and S. Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Cambridge 1984), 23–87.

<sup>18</sup> A. Kazhdan, ‘Hagiographical Notes’, *Byz* 53 (1983), 538–58.

<sup>19</sup> This is pointed out in Mullett, ‘New Literary History’, 68–9.

<sup>20</sup> A. Kazhdan, ‘Some Problems in the Biography of John Mauropous, II’, *Byz* 65 (1995), 362–87.

<sup>21</sup> S. Chondridou, *Ο Κωνσταντίνος Μονομάχος και η εποχή του* (Thessaloniki 2002), 61.

<sup>22</sup> M. Mullett, ‘The Madness of Genre’, *DOP* 46 (1992), 233–43.

<sup>23</sup> See E. Pietsch, *Die Chronographia des Michael Psellos: Kaisergeschichte, Autobiografie und Apologie* (Wiesbaden 2005), and S. Papaioannou, *Michael Psellos: Rhetoric and Authorship in Byzantium* (Cambridge/New York 2013).

argued for an approach that recognizes the historicity of a text, but not to the detriment of its specific textual features. This approach would ideally take into account the concrete embedding of a text in the sphere of its production and reading, considering also its role as an active social agent; in sum, what Spiegel has called the ‘social logic’ of a medieval text.<sup>24</sup>

Therefore the present study will not attempt to explain poems on the basis of the broad ideological currents and cultural trends of the eleventh century. Rather, it will try to provide some clues for understanding the immediate occasions and the reading contexts of poems and poetry collections. As a result, this book intends to place itself among the functional approaches that some scholars have been initiating. These approaches demonstrate that Byzantine poems were used in a real-life context.<sup>25</sup> As such, Wolfram Hörandner and Marc Lauxtermann have elucidated the original inscriptional context of epigrams, and shed light on the relationship between epigrams in books and inscribed epigrams.<sup>26</sup>

This study will also pay much attention to the sociological side of the production and use of poetry. A central question is what social motivations drove someone to commit himself to the act of writing poetry. My approach to this question has been influenced by the conceptual framework in the works of the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.<sup>27</sup> To be sure, his methods and concepts cannot be readily transplanted to medieval literature. But his approach makes clear that aesthetic features in texts have a social relevance that cannot be deduced directly from either the text alone or from the broad cultural currents of the time, but is played out on the level of the ‘field’, a system

<sup>24</sup> G. M. Spiegel, ‘History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages’, *Speculum* 65.1 (1990), 59–86.

<sup>25</sup> On the utilitarian nature of Byzantine literature and the importance of the immediate context and public, see also P. Odorico, ‘Displaying la littérature byzantine’, in: E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies* (Aldershot 2006), I, 213–34.

<sup>26</sup> See e.g. W. Hörandner, ‘Zur kommunikativen Funktion byzantinischer Gedichte’, in: *Acts, XVIIIth International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Selected Papers* (Shepherdstown 1996), IV, 104–18; M. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, passim.

<sup>27</sup> P. Bourdieu, *Les règles de l’art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*, 2nd edn (Paris 1998), is the most extensive application of Bourdieu’s thinking to literature. See also id., *Le sens pratique* (Paris 1980) and id., *La distinction: critique sociale du jugement* (Paris 1979).

of people and institutions that is heavily influenced by external social interests, but also functions according to its own laws. Different persons attempt to defend or conquer positions (or to define new ones), each one of them potentially yielding some form of cultural or social capital. Moreover, Bourdieu insists that the 'belief' in cultural value is something constructed by people who have an interest in its construction. This can make us alert to strategies aimed at defending and advancing ideas about culture that serve above all the producers of culture themselves. In this vein, I will consider poems as socially meaningful acts by which persons aspired to, or defended, certain cultural positions, in turn tied to social and/or material advantages. Hence, I will ask what social agenda the poet had in mind when dedicating a poem, asserting his authorship, responding to reactions of his readers, or entering into polemic.

This set of questions has resulted in seven chapters, each of which approaches our texts from a different angle. Chapter 2, 'Concepts', deals with the problem of the Byzantine perception and definition of literature and poetry. The third chapter, 'Readings', focuses on the circulation, transmission, and performance of poetry. It seeks to shed light on the expectations that Byzantines held when they came into contact with poetry. Chapter 4, 'Collections', builds further on the preceding chapter, looking into the ways poems were assembled in manuscripts and presented to their readers. The fifth chapter, 'Ambitions', explains the function of poetic production as a tool for social advancement. This chapter also analyses the self-representative strategies that poets use to defend their position as intellectuals. The following two chapters describe specific contexts in which learned poetry was produced: that is, the world of the schools and of rival intellectuals. In Chapter 6, 'Education', it is argued that the various independent schools are focal points of intellectual life and literary production in the eleventh century. This chapter also concentrates on didactic poetry, considering it as part of the transmission of knowledge in a school context. Chapter 7, 'Competitions', presents the *logikos agon*, the 'contest of words', as a framework for polemical and satirical poems. I attempt in this chapter to situate these poems in the struggles that defined the intellectual field. The final chapter, 'Patronage', investigates the material motivations for writing poetry: how was poetry rewarded or funded, and how did poets justify this system?

## 1.2. THE ELEVENTH CENTURY: SOME TENDENCIES

Since these questions necessarily involve a consideration of the broader historical context, I will give here a short sketch of the developments that I believe created a particular context for the production and reading of literature and poetry. The period from 1025 (the death of Basileios II) to 1081 (the ascent to the throne of Alexios Komnenos) will form the chronological framework of this study; we will venture outside this period only rarely to discuss literary and meta-literary texts. This is for a good reason: I believe that many of the observations cannot be valid for other periods, since before 1025 and after 1081 imperial authority was based on different premises, and the intellectual elite had a different place in society.

The period between 1025 and 1081 was marked by many changes and insecurities.<sup>28</sup> The empire's social composition, imperial ideology, and world view were not the same in 1081 as they had been fifty-five years before. But it is far from easy to explain the purpose behind these changes and to assess their eventual consequences.

The emperors of the mid eleventh century were only very loosely connected to the legitimate Macedonian dynasty. Up to 1055, they customarily seized the throne by marrying Zoe, one of the last descendants of the dynasty. Romanos III Argyros (1028–34) was the first to do so. Partly due to these legitimacy problems, court intrigues were rampant in this period. The short-lived so-called Paphlagonian dynasty, with Michael IV (1034–41) and Michael V (1041–2), came to power by means of court intrigues. The popular uprising against Michael V in 1042 made it clear that the populace could be set in motion by appealing to their loyalty to the dynasty. The reign of Konstantinos IX Monomachos (1042–55), although beset by rebellions and wars, was relatively stable. But when Theodora, Zoe's sister, died in 1056 after briefly reigning alone, the Macedonian lineage effectively died out. The subsequent emperors, quickly succeeding each other, were often puppets helped to the throne by various political factions in the capital, or by military

<sup>28</sup> Some relevant general studies on the political and cultural life in the eleventh century are: P. Lemerle, *Cinq études sur le XIe siècle byzantin* (Paris 1977), 195–248; A. Kazhdan and A. Wharton Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture from the Eleventh to the Twelfth Centuries* (Berkeley 1985); M. Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025–1204. A Political History* (London/New York 1997), 99–114.

rebellions. The impressive number of military uprisings, rebellions, and usurpations shows how fragile imperial power was in the mid eleventh century.<sup>29</sup> Only in 1081 did one of the military aristocrats, Alexios Komnenos, succeed in establishing a stable reign and a long-lasting dynasty. The more autocratic traits of his regime signified a marked departure from the preceding fifty years of shaky imperial power.

Perhaps out of a desire to compensate for their questionable dynastic status, these emperors embarked on a policy of lavish donations and promotions: they extended the apparatus of court officials and civil servants, and made the higher echelons of the civil hierarchy accessible to people hitherto barred from it.<sup>30</sup> Gifts of the emperor, in the form of promotions, entitlements to supervision over monasteries, tax exemptions, or rights to levy taxes were important sources of income.<sup>31</sup> Partly as a consequence of these policies, vertical mobility is a very important and prominent characteristic of social change in the eleventh century.<sup>32</sup> This is certainly also related to the prosperous economic conditions of the time.<sup>33</sup> An increasing number of people gained access to lucrative positions in the bureaucracy. More than before or afterwards, non-aristocratic people were able to accumulate wealth and influence.

New distributions of power and wealth emerged. The official hierarchy of state functions eroded and gave way to more informal dependence relationships. The court, loosely defined, was the place where people forged alliances, competed with each other for promotions, and sought to have access to the emperor, or, failing that, to people who in turn exercised influence on him. Networking and intercession became ever more decisive for the advancement of

<sup>29</sup> See the list of rebellions and usurpations in J.-C. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963–1210)* (Paris 1990).

<sup>30</sup> J. Haldon, 'Social Elites, Wealth and Power', in: J. Haldon (ed.), *A Social History of Byzantium* (Chichester/Malden 2009), 168–211, esp. 191–2. See also Psellos' account of Michael VI's motivations for introducing mass promotions: Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VII, § 1–2.

<sup>31</sup> J.-C. Cheynet, 'Fortune et puissance de l'aristocratie (Xe–XIIe siècle)', in: V. Kravari, J. Lefort, and C. Morrisson (eds), *Hommes et richesses dans l'empire byzantin* (Paris 1991), II, 199–214.

<sup>32</sup> See A. Kazhdan and M. McCormick, 'The Social World of the Byzantine Court', in: H. Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204* (Washington DC 1997), 167–97, esp. 171–2; H. Ahrweiler, 'Recherches sur la société byzantine au XIe siècle: nouvelles hiérarchies et nouvelles solidarités', *TM* 6 (1976), 99–124, esp. 110–11.

<sup>33</sup> Kazhdan and Wharton Epstein, *Change*, 24–73.

careers.<sup>34</sup> Closeness to the emperor was of utmost importance, but it was a prerogative that could easily be lost. Psellos' letters are an excellent testimony to the ever-shifting privilege of access to the emperor, which is urgently needed to conduct his business. New bonds of social coherence, aptly called 'solidarities' by Ahrweiler, came in the place of old hierarchies.<sup>35</sup> Alliances were formed, but could shift easily. Relationships were based on the reciprocity of services. Demonstrations of friendship can in this respect be seen as primarily instrumental.<sup>36</sup>

These new distributions of social forces and other means of establishing power permitted the formation of an elite which was in many respects a new elite. Its members did not possess traditional assets such as wealth or high birth, but made creative use of other resources (especially intellectual) to gain influence in the socially complicated world of the court. These were the men who profited from the opportunities that education offered them to make social advancement. Typically, they first rose upwards in civil ranks, became judges in the provinces when they were young, and were adorned with a string of ever more imposing titles at court. Often, but not always, they also pursued brilliant careers in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The contemporary term for this group is τὸ πολιτικὸν γένος, mostly translated with a cognate of 'civil'. It is primarily within this civil elite that intellectual abilities and, with them, poetry, became important assets.

Frequently opposed to this civil class is the military aristocracy (τὸ στρατιωτικὸν γένος), consisting of families possessing land properties in the east, whose members were at the same time high-ranking army commanders. They propagated an ideology centred on martial prowess and clan adherence, an ideology that ultimately, under the Komnenian dynasty, came to define the image of the ideal emperor.<sup>37</sup> These families, Doukai, Dalassenoi, Komnenoi, sometimes stood frustrated on the sidelines, but sometimes successfully managed to seize the throne, as Isaakios Komnenos did in 1057. They frequently forged alliances and entertained relations with the civil class, and

<sup>34</sup> Kazhdan and Wharton Epstein, *Change*, 104–6.

<sup>35</sup> Ahrweiler, 'Recherches'.

<sup>36</sup> See generally M. Mullett, 'Byzantium: A Friendly Society?', *Past and Present* 118 (1988), 3–24, and specifically about the eleventh century: 18–20.

<sup>37</sup> A. Kazhdan, 'The Aristocracy and the Imperial Ideal', in: M. Angold (ed.), *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries* (Oxford 1984), 53–74.

many of them had a power base in Constantinople. Hence the antagonism between these two classes has rightly been called into question.<sup>38</sup> Yet it remains a fact that this antagonism was clearly felt and expressly put into words by authors like Psellos. Describing the rebellion of the military leaders against the weak 'civil' emperor Michael VI Diogenes (1068–71), he represents this rebellion as a clash between τὸ πολιτικὸν γένος and τὸ στρατιωτικὸν γένος.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand (just one of the many contradictions surrounding the figure of Psellos), he himself, the ultimate exponent of the civil elite, entertained close friendly relationships through his letters with, for example, the Doukai family.

An important figure in eleventh-century history is Michael Kerouliarios, the extremely influential patriarch (1043–58) eventually brought down with the help of Michael Psellos.<sup>40</sup> He stood for a more populist ideology. The subsequent patriarchs, Konstantinos Leichoudes (1059–64) and Ioannes Xiphilinos (1064–75), were both from a background more narrowly connected with the civil and intellectual elite. The city populace in Constantinople gained in importance, playing an influential role in toppling Michael V in 1042.<sup>41</sup> The eleventh century also witnessed a tradition of mystic monasticism centred on the charisma and the memory of Symeon the New Theologian (died 1022), who proclaimed a message of individual religiosity embedded in traditional asceticism and mysticism. His pupil and ardent supporter, Niketas Stethatos, wrote the *Vita* of his spiritual master, as well as a great quantity of religious and mystic writings.

Psellos expressed the antagonism between the intellectual gentleman and the conservative monk most expressly in a letter to Kerouliarios,<sup>42</sup> but the precise extent of their ideological differences is difficult to assess. Ljubarskij has demonstrated that both parties sometimes adopted the same lines of argumentation (in the attitude

<sup>38</sup> For a full assessment of the question, see Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, 191–8. See also Kazhdan and Wharton Epstein, *Change*, 69; Lemerle, *Cinq études*, 264–7; Haldon, 'Social Elites, Wealth and Power', 185–6.

<sup>39</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VII, §1, and Psellos, *Or. fun. in Leich.*, p. 407.

<sup>40</sup> F. Tinnefeld, 'Michael I Kerouliarios, Patriarch von Konstantinopel (1043–58). Kritische Überlegungen zu einer Biographie', *JÖB* 39 (1989), 95–127.

<sup>41</sup> Angold, *Political History*, 57–8.

<sup>42</sup> Michael Psellos, *Epistola a Michele Cerulario*, ed. U. Criscuolo (Naples 1990).



towards Classical Antiquity, for instance).<sup>43</sup> Conversely, Symeon the New Theologian voiced his contempt for worldly intellectuals,<sup>44</sup> but some of the same motifs (such as the insecurity of an ambitious life) also occur in the later poems of Mauropous. Joan Hussey's study on the subject may be right in concluding that the basic ideas held by both 'ascetics' and 'humanists' were informed by Hellenism and Christianity alike, and that occasional clashes are rather grounded in political differences than in ideological oppositions.<sup>45</sup> Monastic and ascetic ideals were also greatly valued in the milieu of the intellectuals, and were even, as we will see, transposed to their own self-representations.

For at least a short period of time during Monomachos' reign, a '*gouvernement des philosophes*' was in place, built around a clique of Michael Psellos and his friends.<sup>46</sup> The function of 'consul of philosophers', created around 1046 especially for Psellos, gave official sanction to this intellectual precedence. In a certain sense, the position of the intellectual in the mid eleventh century was unique. His later colleagues in the Komnenian period were dependent professionals, seeking, and indeed begging for, patronage.<sup>47</sup> And during the autocratic reign of Basileios II, intellectual efforts were tightly controlled by the emperor himself; intellectual occupations served as a rather secondary means of consolidating a high status in society. But in the few years in between, learning (*hoi logoi*) in its pure form was represented as something to be socially rewarded and sanctioned on an official basis. Obviously, this idea was developed and propagated by the intellectuals themselves; but some emperors were apparently all too willing to endorse this view. The reign of Konstantinos Monomachos in particular appears as a hotbed of cultural and intellectual achievements. The emperor funded building projects and was also an important figure in the patronage of literature. It was during his reign that all three of our poets came to occupy important functions.

<sup>43</sup> J. Ljubarskij, 'The Fall of an Intellectual. The Intellectual and Moral Atmosphere in the 11th Century', in: S. Vryonis (ed.), *Essays on the Slavic World and the Eleventh Century* (New Rochelle 1992), 175–82.

<sup>44</sup> See e.g. Symeon Neos Theologos. *Hymnen*, ed. A. Kambylis (Berlin/New York 1976), hymns 20, 21, 24, 58.

<sup>45</sup> J. Hussey, *Ascetics and Humanists in Eleventh-century Byzantium* (London 1960).

<sup>46</sup> See Lemerle, *Cinq études*, 195–248.

<sup>47</sup> Kazhdan and Wharton Epstein, *Change*, 130–1.

New intellectual preoccupations came to the foreground in the eleventh century. Law was one of them. Psellos and his friend Ioannes Xiphilinos probably based a considerable part of their intellectual reputation on their legal knowledge. Philosophy is another domain that is frequently mentioned as regaining vigour in this time, under the impulse of Psellos.<sup>48</sup> Psellos in any case identified himself as a philosopher, and took pride in the fact that he blended philosophy with what he called 'rhetoric'. Rhetoric flourished: panegyric speeches for emperors, funeral orations, letters of all sorts, and a plethora of occasional texts that are harder to pin down to a separate genre. Teaching played an enormous (and underestimated) role in the oeuvre of especially Psellos: apart from summaries in various fields of knowledge, many of his texts deal with the practical circumstances of teaching. Evidently, the rhetoric texts produced by this elite are without exception written in a learned, highbrow, and sometimes deliberately obscure Greek.

The intellectual field, if we may so call it, had no clear-cut structure. Struggles and polemics were the order of the day. Personal relationships, especially with the emperor, were also in this domain the decisive factor. The positions occupied by intellectuals were lucrative but insecure. Favours were temporary and imperial benevolence could shift quickly. This could happen when a new emperor from the outside seized the throne, such as Isaakios Komnenos in 1057; but even under the same emperor a fall from favour was always imminent. This fate befell Psellos and Mauropous towards the end of Monomachos' reign, when they and some of their friends were forced to leave the capital under circumstances that are not entirely clear.

That the mid eleventh century was a fruitful time for cultural and intellectual life lies beyond doubt, but the exact background and purpose are difficult to gauge. This is not so much due to a dearth of sources, but rather to the difficulty of interpreting them. A particular problem in this respect is the fact that one person dominates cultural life in this period: Michael Psellos. By the sheer quantity of his works alone he towers above the rest of his contemporaries. In his function of consul of philosophers, and later as imperial preceptor (of the future emperor Michael VII), he seems to have

<sup>48</sup> J. Duffy, 'Hellenic Philosophy in Byzantium and the Lonely Mission of Michael Psellos', in: K. Ierodiakonou, *Byzantine Philosophy and its Ancient Sources* (Oxford 2002), 139–56.

had a firm control over the intellectual field. It is notoriously difficult to sift a reliable voice from the myriad representations he gives of himself and of his opinions. He himself says: 'I do not know who I am, whether a philosopher, or perhaps another animal even more complex than Typhon.'<sup>49</sup> Notions such as philosophy and rhetoric are ambivalent, and it is hazardous to assess his stance towards Antiquity and Christian theology, both of which play a great role in the content and language of his works.<sup>50</sup> Consequently, there is considerable dissent among scholars over the question of how to interpret the figure of Psellos. Are his philosophical pursuits to be considered as the germs of an upcoming humanism,<sup>51</sup> or as rational philosophical inquiries enjoying a short-lived atmosphere of free intellectual thought, only to be curbed by the advent of the Komnenoi,<sup>52</sup> or even as subversive neo-pagan thinking?<sup>53</sup> Or should we rather view his 'philosophy' as a means for self-representation, used merely as an aggrandizing title that loosely refers to his derivative scientific texts?<sup>54</sup>

Hence, there remain many questions attached to general developments and tendencies in the eleventh century. Is the intellectual and civil orientation of the emperors of the mid eleventh century to blame for the military disasters against the Seldjucs in the later decades?<sup>55</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Psellos, *Ep. Sathas* 174 (p. 442, l. 21–3).

<sup>50</sup> For an overview of older answers to this question, most of them quite sceptical about the truly philosophic nature of Psellos' work, see J. Ljubarskij, *Ličnost' i tvorčestvo* (Moscou 1978), gr. trans. *Η προσωπικότητα και το έργο του Μιχαήλ Ψελλού* (Athens 2004), 12–40. For a recent overview of Psellos' life and importance, see Papaioannou, *Rhetoric and Authorship*.

<sup>51</sup> On Psellos' 'humanism' see, for example, the extensive introduction to U. Crisculo (ed.), *Michele Psello: Epistola a Giovanni Xifilino* (Naples 1990).

<sup>52</sup> L. Clucas, *The Trial of John Italos and the Crisis of Intellectual Values in Byzantium* (Munich 1981); see also the heading 'Verhinderte Freidenkere!' for Psellos and Mauropous in J. Rosenqvist, *Die byzantinische Literatur: vom 6. Jahrhundert bis zum Fall Konstantinopels 1453* (Berlin 2007), 98.

<sup>53</sup> See the provocative view of Kaldellis on Psellos, in A. Kaldellis, *The Argument of Psellos' Chronographia* (Leiden/Boston/Cologne 1999) and A. Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium. The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge/New York 2007).

<sup>54</sup> J. Gouillard, 'La religion des philosophes', *TM* 6 (1976), 305–24.

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, two rather divergent opinions brought together in one symposium: S. Vryonis, 'The Eleventh Century: Was there a Crisis in the Empire?', in: *Η αυτοκρατορία σε κρίση (:) Το Βυζάντιο τον 11ο αιώνα (1025–1081)* (Athens 2003), 17–43, for a negative view on imperial policy, and J. Haldon, 'Approaches to an Alternative Military History of the Period ca. 1025–1071', in the same volume, 45–74, who sees instead an internal reorganization of the military.

Was Monomachos a weak and indulgent emperor, squandering the resources of the empire, or was he a vigorous reformer of state and institutions, and a patron of cultural life?<sup>56</sup> Are Monomachos' educational reforms a step in the direction of a potentially enlightened university,<sup>57</sup> or were they aimed at a tighter centralizing control of bureaucrats? And does the eventual ascent to power of the Komnenoi signify an important break with eleventh-century developments, or are their reforms a continuation of existing trends?<sup>58</sup> In short, in important matters the eleventh century remains a period that is 'hard to interpret'.<sup>59</sup> We can only discern certain developments running counter to each other, without understanding precisely how they clashed, or how far-reaching their impact was.

### 1.3. POETIC TEXTS IN BYZANTIUM, 1025–1081

As has just been demonstrated, the period from 1025 to 1081 forms a historical and cultural unity, with borders defined by the ending and beginning of periods of tight imperial control. These chronological limits moreover correspond more or less neatly with the first datable poems of Christophoros on the one hand and the last datable poems of Psellos on the other hand.

The effect of these chronological boundaries is that some notable poets fall outside the scope of this study, although they will occasionally turn up to provide a background. This is the case with some poets flourishing during the reign of Basileios II: Symeon the New Theologian, Nikephoros Ouranos, Symeon the Metaphrast, Ioannes Geometres, and the shady figures of Ioannes of Melitene

<sup>56</sup> The first view is the traditional one, while the reforming measures of Monomachos have been stressed by Angold, *Byzantine Empire*, 56–70, and his cultural interests by Chondridou, *Κωνσταντίνος Μονομάχος*.

<sup>57</sup> R. Browning, 'Enlightenment and Repression in Byzantium in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', *Past and Present* 69 (1975), 3–23.

<sup>58</sup> Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change*, tends to favour the latter hypothesis, while for instance Browning, 'Enlightenment and Repression', sees rather an important break in 1081.

<sup>59</sup> M. Mullett, 'Originality in the Byzantine Letter: The Case of Exile', in: A. R. Littlewood (ed.), *Originality in Byzantine Literature Art and Music* (Oxford 1995), 39–58, esp. 50.

and the Anonymous Patrician.<sup>60</sup> At the other end of the century, the reign of Alexios I Komnenos witnessed a new generation of poets such as Theophylaktos of Ochrid, Philippos Monotropos, Nikolaos of Kerkyra, Manuel Straboromanos, and perhaps Alexios himself. We will be concerned with the generation between: men (indeed, all men) who came of age under Romanos III Argyros (1028–34) or his immediate successors, attained the summit of their careers under Konstantinos IX Monomachos (1043–55), and in one way or another remained active in the subsequent decades. Niketas of Herakleia, already writing poems in the 1070s, can be situated at the transition from our generation of poets to the next one.

Although the writing and reading of versified texts in general will be the object of research, the focus will mainly be on the secular learned poetry written by a select group of people based in Constantinople. As a result, vernacular poetry and hymnographic poetry largely fall outside the scope of this book. For vernacular poetry, this can be easily justified: it has left only minimal traces in written texts firmly datable to the eleventh century. We can assume, of course, that vernacular poetry was being composed, and that it circulated orally. But it is only in the twelfth century that the first substantial written remains come to the surface, so a study of this type of text would necessarily involve a wider chronological perspective.

Hymnographic poetry was composed in the eleventh century by Christophoros and Mauropous, and, it should not be forgotten, by poets living in monastic communities in southern Italy.<sup>61</sup> However, hymnographic poetry would require a separate study to deal with questions of function, circulation, and the like, which are, I believe, quite different from those of secular poetry.

It would be a mistake, however, to give the impression that vernacular and liturgical poetry are worlds apart from learned secular poetry. On the contrary, there was permeation between these categories of poetry (categories which were created *post factum* in any case):<sup>62</sup> the fact alone that some poets were active in several of these categories is indicative of this.

<sup>60</sup> About these poets, see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*. On the poetry of Symeon, see A. Markopoulos (ed.), *Τέσσερα κείμενα για την ποίηση του Συμεών του Νέου Θεολόγου* (Athens 2008), 1–36.

<sup>61</sup> See the overview in H.-G. Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im Byzantinischen Reich* (Munich 1959), 607–9.

<sup>62</sup> M. Hinterberger, *Δημώδης και λόγια λογοτεχνία: διαχωριστικές γραμμές και συνδυαστικοί κρίκοι*, in: Agapitos and Odorico (eds), *Pour une nouvelle histoire*, 153–65.

Even if we narrow down our corpus of texts thus, it remains a heterogeneous amalgam with ill-defined borders. As said, it is considerable in quantity, but it is still dwarfed by twelfth-century poetic production.<sup>63</sup> Although dactylic hexameters, elegiac distichs, and anacreontics are still used, as in previous centuries, the dodecasyllable is the dominant metre. This typically Byzantine metre combines the traditional prosodic pattern of the iambic trimeter with new rhythmic patterns, based on expiratory stress. Each dodecasyllable counts twelve syllables, has a stress on the penultimate syllable, and has a caesura after either the fifth or the seventh syllable.<sup>64</sup> At the same time, almost each dodecasyllable from our period can be scanned as a iambic trimeter, if one is not too precise about the quantity of the *dichrona* (alpha, iota, upsilon). The *politikos stichos* is also used extensively; this more recent metre was exclusively based on rhythm and not on prosody, and was later to develop into the most favoured metre of Greek popular poetry.<sup>65</sup>

Three names immediately come to mind: those of Christophoros Mitylenaios, Ioannes Mauropous, and Michael Psellos. They tower above their contemporary colleagues in terms of the quantity of manuscripts in which their poems are preserved, the number of poems still extant, and their reputation (in Byzantine times as well as now).

Christophoros Mitylenaios' poems are probably the oldest of these three. Almost all our knowledge about this poet derives from the poems themselves or from the lemmata that accompany the poems in the manuscripts. The historical events or persons mentioned in his poems can all be situated in the period from 1034 to around 1045.<sup>66</sup> The longest of the lemmata reads: 'Various verses of Christophoros Mitylenaios, *patrikios* and *anthypatos*, becoming *krites*

<sup>63</sup> E. Jeffreys, 'Why Produce Verse in Twelfth-century Constantinople?', in: P. Odorico, M. Hinterberger, and P. Agapitos (eds), «*Doux remède . . .*» *Poésie et poétique à Byzance. Actes du IVe colloque international philologique, Paris, 23–24–25 février 2006* (Paris 2009), 219–28, here 222–3.

<sup>64</sup> The most important work on the dodecasyllable remains P. Maas, 'Der byzantinische Zwölfsilber', *BZ* 12 (1903), 278–323.

<sup>65</sup> Among the many works on the *politikos stichos*, most useful for our purpose were M. Jeffreys, 'The Nature and Origin of the Political Verse', *DOP* 28 (1974), 141–95 and M. Lauxtermann, *The Spring of Rhythm. An Essay on the Political Verse and Other Byzantine Metres* (Vienna 1999).

<sup>66</sup> For a complete overview, see E. Follieri, 'Le poesie di Cristoforo Mitileneo come fonte storica', *Zbornik radova Vizantoloskog instituta* 8 (1964), 133–48.

of Paphlagonia and Armeniaka.<sup>67</sup> There is also a seal that probably belonged to him,<sup>68</sup> and which, as far as I can see, has gone unnoticed in studies on Christophoros. It mentions the functions of *protospatharios*, judge of the *velum*, and *krites* of Paphlagonia. Moreover, Christophoros has left something as a *sphragis* at the end of poem 114. Here, he mentions his function of imperial secretary (*ὑπογραφεύς*), and the neighbourhood of Constantinople in which he lived, Protasiou (see also poem 36.12).

The collection of 145 poems of Christophoros was given the title *στίχοι διάφοροι* in the manuscripts. It is preserved as a whole in the Grottaferrata manuscript *Crypt. Z.a.XXIX* (thirteenth century), but the mice that Christophoros prophetically foresaw devouring his books in poem 103 have gnawed at the manuscript and thus considerably damaged his textual legacy.<sup>69</sup> In the other manuscripts that preserve poems of Christophoros, the poems mostly appear in the same order as in the *Cryptensis*, which indicates that there once existed an authoritative collection (prepared by the poet himself?).<sup>70</sup>

The *editio princeps* of Christophoros' 'Various verses' by Antonio Rocchi was swiftly superseded by the edition of Eduard Kurtz, who not only provided very acceptable conjectures for partially damaged verses in the *Cryptensis* but also meticulously identified Christophoros' poems in other manuscripts. These manuscripts supplemented 552 verses of the 1612 verses that are illegible in the *Cryptensis*. Since then, it has been possible to make a small number

<sup>67</sup> See E. Kurtz, *Die Gedichte des Christophoros Mitylenaios* (Leipzig 1903), 1: *Στίχοι διάφοροι Χριστοφόρου πατρικίου ἀνθυπάτου, γεγονότος κριτοῦ τῆς Παφλαγονίας καὶ τῶν Ἀρμενιακῶν, τοῦ Μιτυληναίου*. The lemma is already present in the *Cryptensis*, and is supplemented by other manuscripts. The orthography of Christophoros' surname varies, but in contemporary sources (e.g. his seal), the name is rendered with iota first and upsilon thereafter.

<sup>68</sup> J.-C. Cheynet, C. Morisson, and W. Seibt, *Sceaux byzantins de la collection Henri Seyrig* (Paris 1991), p.137, nr. 193. See also A.-K. Wassiliou and W. Seibt, *Die byzantinischen Bleisiegel in Österreich, 2. Teil: Zentral- und Provinzialverwaltung* (Vienna 2004), 200, who distinguish our poet from another Christophoros Mitylenaios who has left sigillographic traces.

<sup>69</sup> Dating of the Grottaferrata manuscript: fifteenth century according to Kurtz, *Die Gedichte*, ii, but thirteenth century in P. Canart, 'Le livre grec en Italie méridionale sous les règnes normand et souabe: aspects matériels et sociaux', *Scrittura e civiltà*, 2 (1978), 103–62. This dating is also accepted by M. De Groote, *Christophori Mitylenaii Versuum variorum collectio Cryptensis* (Turnhout 2012), xxvii.

<sup>70</sup> See Kurtz, *Die Gedichte*, x–xvi.

of corrections and additions,<sup>71</sup> which are now incorporated in the new edition by Marc De Groote.<sup>72</sup> Christophoros' poems, as their title indicates, are a hotchpotch of genres, reflecting various occasions. Religious epigrams, funeral poems (especially for family members), descriptions of events in Constantinople, many satirical and polemical pieces and mocking epigrams, riddles and other sophistic *Spielerien*, encomia on nature phenomena, etc. are all present. Christophoros Mitylenaios' poetry gives us a diverse picture of eleventh-century Constantinople: its horse races, festivals, monuments, streets, churches. His poems, often witty and playful, deride contemporaries who are credulous, vain, hypocritical, or otherwise subject to human flaws.

Christophoros may also be the author of the long poem *Εἰς τὸν Μανιάκην περὶ τοῦ μούλτου*, transmitted before poem 65 in two manuscripts,<sup>73</sup> but the poem is not present in the Grottaferrata manuscript. Even if Christophoros is not the author,<sup>74</sup> the poem, describing Georgios Maniakes' rebellion in 1043, must surely date from the eleventh century. It is at any rate the longest hexametric poem of the period.

Apart from his *στίχοι διάφοροι*, Christophoros also composed four calendars in four different metres (stichera, canones, iambic disticha (dodecasyllables), and dactylic hexameters). These calendars, which honour day by day all the saints of the year, are transmitted in many more manuscripts than his *στίχοι διάφοροι*, and were even translated into Slavonic languages.<sup>75</sup> The iambic disticha were included in the *Menaia* of the orthodox liturgy, which secured them a lasting popularity.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>71</sup> See C. Crimi, 'Recuperi Cristoforei', *Bollettino della badia greca di grottaferrata* 39 (1985), 231–42.

<sup>72</sup> M. De Groote, *Christophori Mitylenaii Versuum variorum collectio Cryptensis* (Turnhout 2012).

<sup>73</sup> S. Lambros (ed.), *Ἱστορικὰ μελετήματα* (Athens 1884), 162–5 and now M. Broggin, 'Il carme *Εἰς τὸν Μανιάκην περὶ τοῦ μούλτου* attribuito al Cristoforo Mitileneo', *Porphyra* 15 (2011), 14–34.

<sup>74</sup> Kurtz, *Die Gedichte*, xvii–xviii, does not believe so; Broggin, 'Il carme', 34, also has doubts, but does not exclude Christophorean authorship.

<sup>75</sup> E. Follieri, *I calendari in metro innografico di Cristoforo Mitileneo* (Brussels 1980), I, 251–2.

<sup>76</sup> The calendars in stichera en canones are edited in Follieri, *I calendari*. The calendars in iambs and hexameters are edited in S. Eustratiades, *Ἀγιολόγιον τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας* (Athens 1995), as far as they occur in the *Menaia*, and also partly in Follieri, *I calendari*, vol. II. Some additional disticha in E. Follieri, 'Il calendario giambico di Cristoforo di Mitilene secondo i mss. Palat. gr. 383 e Paris. gr. 3041', *Analecta Bollandiana* 77 (1959), 245–304.



Ioannes Mauroπους is, after Psellos, perhaps the best known author of the eleventh century. His literary legacy is for ever determined by *Vat. gr. 676*, a manuscript of his collected works, compiled and arranged by himself.<sup>77</sup> The poetic section of the *Vaticanus* contains 99 pieces. At the beginning of the manuscript we also find some book epigrams or prefaces,<sup>78</sup> and, at the end, an epigram by his secretary Hesaias.<sup>79</sup> The 99 poems are also preserved in some later copies, clearly dependent on the *Vaticanus*.<sup>80</sup> His poetry has been edited on the basis of the key manuscript by Johannes Bollig and Paul de Lagarde.<sup>81</sup> His thoughtfully arranged collection revolves around the theme of the relationship between word and life. It also testifies to the blissful life at the court of Konstantinos Monomachos and it provides a lively poetic counterpart to many works of art.

Mauroπους was one of the most important intellectuals of his time. He was a teacher and friend of Psellos, who dedicated to him not only numerous letters, but also a glowing encomium.<sup>82</sup> He functioned under Konstantinos Monomachos as a court orator, writing orations for important occasions, and authoring the *Neara*, the foundation document of Monomachos' law school attached to the monastery of St George in Mangana. Around 1049–50, he was removed from court by being promoted to the metropolitan see of faraway Euchaita.<sup>83</sup> In

<sup>77</sup> See below, pp. 129–33.

<sup>78</sup> P. de Lagarde (ed.), *Iohannis Euchaitorum Metropolitae quae in Codice Vaticano Graeco 676 supersunt* (Göttingen 1882), v–vi. These poems are surely from the pen of Mauroπους and not a separate person, Ioannes Diakonos, postulated in A. Kominis, *Τὸ βυζαντινὸν ἱερὸν ἐπίγραμμα καὶ οἱ ἐπιγραμματοποιοί* (Athens 1966), 148.

<sup>79</sup> Lagarde, *Iohannis Euchaitorum quae . . . supersunt*, iv–v.

<sup>80</sup> A. Karpozilos, *Συμβολή στη μελέτη του βίου και του έργου του Ιωάννη Μαυρόποδος* (Ioannina 1982), 61–6, superseding R. Anastasi, 'Il Canzoniere di Giovanni di Euchaita', *SicGymn* 22 (1969), 109–44.

<sup>81</sup> P. de Lagarde (ed.), *Iohannis Euchaitorum Metropolitae quae in Codice Vaticano Graeco 676 supersunt* (Göttingen 1882). Some minor corrections in G. Pitsinelis, 'Προτεινόμενα διορθώσεις εις επιγράμματα Ιωάννου του Μαυρόποδος', *Επετηρίς Εταιρείας Βυζαντινών Σπουδών* 50 (1999–2000), 270.

<sup>82</sup> Psellos, *Or. pan.* 17.

<sup>83</sup> For Mauroπους' biography, I rely chiefly on Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, 23–50, which clearly superseded earlier studies. A slightly more succinct treatment is to be found in A. Karpozilos, *The Letters of Ioannes Mauroπους Metropolitan of Euchaita* (Thessaloniki 1990), 9–27. I will not follow here the suggestions advanced in A. Kazhdan, 'Some Problems in the Biography of John Mauroπους', *JÖB* 43 (1993), 87–111, who proposes that Mauroπους was appointed to Euchaita much later, under Konstantinos X. Doukas. First, the argument is based on a misunderstanding of the generic elements of poems 85–8; second, there is the unmistakable evidence of poem 57, written in Euchaita for Konstantinos Monomachos (Mauroπους cannot have had an attachment

advanced age, probably in the 1070s, he returned to Constantinople, to the monastery of John the Baptist *tes Petras*, where he continued to be active as an author.<sup>84</sup>

Since Mauropous' collection is, by his own account in poem 1, a selection from a greater corpus of poems, we can assume that Mauropous is the author of other poems not transmitted by *Vat. gr. 676*. There is a didactic poem about etymology surviving in two later manuscripts, both of which attribute it to Mauropous.<sup>85</sup> There are also some dodecasyllables transmitted in the *akolouthia* for the Three Hierarchs (whose feast Mauropous is said to have initiated).<sup>86</sup> Many notices in manuscripts ascribe this whole *akolouthia* to Mauropous, so it is reasonable to assume that the verses are indeed from Mauropous' hand.

Mauropous' poetic oeuvre comprises epigrams on religious works of art, epigrams for books, polemical poems, encomia on the imperial family, and funeral poems on emperors and high-ranking officials. His *εἰς ἑαυτόν* poems, introspective poems in imitation of Gregory of Nazianzos, are quite unique for this period. Mauropous also composed a considerable number of hymnographic *canones*, of which some are still unedited.<sup>87</sup>

The third important poet of the eleventh century is Michael Psellos. His works are of a dazzling quantity and diversity. The most famous now is his *Chronographia*, a largely autobiographical history of the eleventh century. He also wrote many occasional orations, hundreds of letters, and many short works in almost every field of knowledge: theology, rhetoric, physics, metaphysics, astrology, occult

to this fairly obscure Pontic city *before* being appointed there). For other arguments, see A. Karpozilos, 'The Biography of Ioannes Mauropous Again', *Ελληνικά* 44 (1994), 51–60.

<sup>84</sup> See the lemmata in the manuscript *Vindob. theol. gr. 78*, f. 8; cf. also Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, 28 n. 38. See also X. Lequeux, 'Jean Mauropous, Jean Mauropodès et le culte de Saint Baras au monastère du Prodrome de Pétra à Constantinople', *Analecta Bollandiana* 120 (2002), 101–9.

<sup>85</sup> The entire poem, counting 476 dodecasyllables, is edited in R. Reitzenstein, *M. Terentius Varro und Johannes Mauropus von Euchaita. Einer Studie zur Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft* (Leipzig 1901).

<sup>86</sup> Edited in S. G. Mercati, 'Presunti giambi di Demetrio Triclinio sulla festa dei tre gerarchi Basilio, Gregorio Nazianzeno e Giovanni Crisostomo', in: *Collectanea Byzantina* (Bari 1970), I, 529–37, text: 534–5.

<sup>87</sup> An overview in F. D'Aiuto, *Tre canoni di Giovanni Mauropode in onore di santi militari* (Rome 1994), 22–4.

sciences, and many more. In contrast to Mauropous and Christophoros, no comprehensive collection of Michael Psellos' poetry was ever made in the Byzantine period. The full extent of his poetic corpus is therefore yet more unclear. Many manuscripts tend to ascribe poems to him that are surely not his. Westerink's edition (which also provides each poem with a Latin title) lists 37 genuine and 55 pseudo-Pselliana.<sup>88</sup> In his poetry, we see some of the multiple roles that Psellos played in contemporary society: the role of teacher, most importantly, but also those of the courtier and the contested intellectual. The bulk of his poems is made up of didactic poems, of which nine are lengthy poems on diverse subjects such as biblical exegesis, grammar, rhetoric, law, medicine, theology, and ecclesiastical history. A very remarkable feature is that these large didactic poems are all, except the poem on medicine, written in *politikoi stichoi* and dedicated to emperors. Psellos also wrote a long funeral poem on Maria Skleraina, the mistress of Konstantinos Monomachos, some court poetry for Isaakios Komnenos, two notable satirical poems, some hymnographic poetry, and (perhaps) some epigrams.

Even for some of the poems that Westerink listed as genuine, false ascriptions cannot be ruled out: poems 14 *De metro iambico*, 15 *De regimine*, 20 *In Comneni sepulcrum*, 31 *In sanctum Georgium*, 32 *In Photium* are all transmitted in late and/or untrustworthy manuscripts. Whoever the author may have been, poem 20 refers to an eleventh-century event, and poem 31 is likely to be a celebration of the church of St George in Mangana, founded by Konstantinos Monomachos. Also in the case of poem 30, the grounds for attributing it to Psellos are highly questionable: two of the four manuscripts in fact seem to connect it instead with Christophoros.

The pseudo-Pselliana are a very heterogeneous group of poems. Poems 53 to 61 are didactic poems, for various reasons not to be attributed to Psellos. They seem all inspired by Psellos' versifying method, sometimes also reusing some of his verses. This could point

<sup>88</sup> L. G. Westerink (ed.), *Michael Psellus. Poemata* (Stuttgart/Leipzig 1992). For some criticisms on this edition, see M. D. Spadaro, 'Note filologiche a poesie del secolo XI', in: U. Criscuolo and R. Maisano (eds), *La poesia bizantina. Atti della terza Giornata di studi bizantini sotto il patrocinio della Associazione Italiana di Studi Bizantini (Macerata, 11–12 maggio 1993)* (Naples 1995), 209–34.

to a later date for these poems, but it would require more research to date, identify, and contextualize the pseudo-Pselliana.<sup>89</sup>

Apart from these three prominent poetic figures, there are some ‘minor’ poets tucked away in old editions, who have for that reason been suffering from neglect. One poet especially active in didactic poetry is Niketas of Herakleia, metropolitan of Serrai. This Niketas was also a prolific author in the theological field; his commentaries on Gregory of Nazianzos were widely copied. Some of his poems have been dated to the 1070s, most of them somewhat later; so he can be situated in the generation after Psellos. His poems have not yet been edited in full, and the existing editions are often outdated and/or hard to access.<sup>90</sup> Most of them are didactic poems, connected to the teaching of a *grammatikos*. Some of his poems are written, curiously enough, in hymnographic metres.

A less prominent, but no less interesting, poet is Michael Grammatikos, who has left us seven poems.<sup>91</sup> Mercati identified Michael Grammatikos with another poet, a certain Michael the Hieromonk, but Lauxtermann has shown that these are separate persons.<sup>92</sup> The poems of Michael Grammatikos can, on good grounds but not conclusively, be dated to the eleventh century.<sup>93</sup> Even Michael’s small oeuvre displays a great variety of subjects. He wrote a long funeral poem and a satire on a wanton bishop; his other poems have mostly religious subjects, and there are also shorter epigrams.

Another poetry collection from the eleventh century, apparently by a single poet, was edited more than a century ago by Giuseppe Sola,<sup>94</sup>

<sup>89</sup> See W. Hörandner and A. Paul, ‘Zu Ps.-Psellos, Gedichte 67 (*Ad monachum superbum*) und 68 (*Ad eundem*)’, *Medioevo greco* 11 (2011), 107–38.

<sup>90</sup> Exhaustive overviews of Niketas’ works and manuscripts are to be found in: B. Roosen, ‘The Works of Nicetas Heracleensis ὁ τοῦ Σερραίων’, *Byz* 69 (1999), 119–44, and J. Schneider, ‘La poésie didactique à Byzance: Nicétas d’Héraclée’, *Bulletin de l’Association Guillaume Budé* 58 (1999), 388–423. See also T. Antonopoulou, ‘The Orthographical Kanons of Nicetas of Heraclea’, *JÖB* 53 (2003), 171–85.

<sup>91</sup> Transmitted in *Vat. Pal. gr.* 367 (s. XIV). Edited in: S. G. Mercati, ‘Intorno a Μιχαὴλ Γραμματικός ὁ Ἱερομόναχος’, in: *Collectanea Byzantina*, I, 114–20; and S. G. Mercati, ‘Ancora intorno a Μιχαὴλ Γραμματικός ὁ Ἱερομόναχος’, in: *Collectanea Byzantina*, I, 121–35, and entirely in S. Lambros, ‘Ἐπιγράμματα ἀνέκδοτα Μιχαὴλ τοῦ Γραμματικοῦ’, *NE* 14 (1917), 3–13.

<sup>92</sup> Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 318–19.

<sup>93</sup> Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 319, and F. Lauritzen, ‘Michael the Grammarian’s Irony about Hypsilon. A Step towards Reconstructing Byzantine Pronunciation’, *BSI* 67 (2009), 161–8.

<sup>94</sup> G. Sola, ‘Giambografi sconosciuti dell’XI secolo’, *Roma e oriente* 11 (1916), 18–27 and 149–53.

and brought back to the attention of scholarship by Marc Lauxtermann.<sup>95</sup> The poems of this poet, henceforth called the Anonymus of Sola (Anon. Sola), are transmitted in an eleventh-century manuscript (*Vat. gr. 753*). Most of his poems can be dated to the period 1028–41, while one can be dated to around 990.<sup>96</sup> Anon. Sola wrote epigrams on objects commissioned by the imperial family. One poem is the story of an enchanting boat trip in the company of poetry lovers, and there is also a series of seven small polemical poems.

Scattered over several manuscripts, we find many more anonymous poetic pieces datable to the mid eleventh century. *Marc. gr. 524* (thirteenth century) contains a highly interesting miscellaneous collection of poetic pieces. The beginning of the manuscript contains a dozen poems, otherwise unknown, connected to the period of Konstantinos Monomachos: he or Keroularios are named in poems 2, 3, 5, 8, 10, and 11.<sup>97</sup>

Another series of eleventh-century poems can be found in *Athen. 1040* (fourteenth century). A poetic section at the end of the manuscript starts with an anonymous poem on the church of Saint George in Mangana built by Monomachos, who is expressly named.<sup>98</sup> Then follows Mauropous 47 and a poem addressed to Konstantinos Monomachos, in which an aged literate man asks for consideration for his deplorable financial state.<sup>99</sup> Both anonymous poems were ascribed to Mauropous by Karpozilos; in the case of the latter poem, there is sufficient contradictory biographical evidence to reject this.<sup>100</sup> In any case, both poems can safely be dated to Monomachos' reign. Finally,

<sup>95</sup> M. Lauxtermann, 'Byzantine Poetry and the Paradox of Basil II's Reign', in: P. Magdalino (ed.), *Byzantium in the Year 1000* (Leiden/Boston/Cologne 2003), 199–216.

<sup>96</sup> Lauxtermann, 'Paradox', 199.

<sup>97</sup> An overview of incipits in S. Lambros, "Ο Μαρκιανός κώδιξ 524", *NE* 8 (1911), 3–59; 123–92; edition of nrs. 1 and 7, and remarks on chronology, in W. Hörandner, 'Epigrams on Icons and Sacred Objects. The Collection of Cod. Marc. gr. 524 once again', in: M. Salvatore (ed.), *La poesia tardoantica e medievale. Atti del I Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Macerata, 4–5 maggio 1998* (Alessandria 2001), 117–24. Foteini Spingou is preparing an edition of these poems.

<sup>98</sup> Edited in I. Sakkellion and A. I. Sakkellion, *Κατάλογος τῶν χειρογράφων τῆς Ἐθνικῆς Βιβλιοθήκης τῆς Ἑλλάδος* (Athens 1892), 184–5.

<sup>99</sup> Edited in Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, 72–3.

<sup>100</sup> P. Gautier, Review of Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, in: *REB* 38 (1980), 310 and R. Anastasi, Review of Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, in: *BZ* 75 (1982), 354–6, both point to the age and social status of the poet, incompatible with what we know of Mauropous' biography; see also the doubts expressed in Kazhdan, 'Problems, II', 364. See however C. De Stefani, 'A Few Thoughts on the Influence of Classical and Byzantine Poetry on the Profane Poems of Ioannes Mauropous', in: F. Bernard and K. Demoen (eds),

the manuscript contains a poem by a certain Basileios Kekaumenos on the death of Anastasios Lizix,<sup>101</sup> a historical person known to us as a friend of Psellos.<sup>102</sup>

The circle of persons dedicated to the memory of Symeon the New Theologian also composed poetry in his honour. There are four poems on Symeon that seem to go back to the time when Niketas prepared an edition of his hymns. All authors of these poems are named: Hierotheos of the monastery Horaia Pege; Alexios, *meγas didaskalos*; Niketas Theophiles 'of the Great Church' (Hagia Sophia); and Basileios, *protasekretis* of the Evergetis monastery.<sup>103</sup> In the same milieu, Alexios the deacon wrote a poem on the work 'on the Celestial Hierarchy' of Niketas Stethatos, inc. *Εννάδι μία τῶν κεφαλαίων λόγου*.<sup>104</sup> We also have one poem on the Theotokos by a certain Ioannes Kossiphes, metropolitan of Thebes.<sup>105</sup>

Some poems are preserved because they are attached to other works of more famous poets. In the case of Psellos, there is the four-line invective poem of Sabbaites (or of a certain monk Iakobos) that provoked in response Psellos' poems 21 and/or 22.<sup>106</sup> Similarly, we have an epigram as an annex to a work of Psellos in defence of a *grammatikos*.<sup>107</sup>

Many poems of lesser-known poets might have been written in the eleventh century but cannot be dated precisely. Such is the case of a series of poems in *Vat. gr.* 1587, edited by Giuseppe Schirò.<sup>108</sup> These

*Poetry and its Contexts in Eleventh-century Byzantium* (Farnham/Burlington 2012), 155–79, here 158–9.

<sup>101</sup> Edited in S. G. Mercati, 'Versi di Basilio Cecaumeno in morte di Anastasio Lizix', in: *Collectanea Byzantina*, I, 321–42, text: 336–42.

<sup>102</sup> P. Gautier, 'Monodies inédites de Michel Psellos', *REB* 36 (1978), 82–151, here 89–90, for the identification of the Lizix of this poem with the Lizix of Psellos. Gautier also suggests that the poet Basileios Kekaumenos could be the same as Basileios Protoasekretis, ktetor of Evergetis, despite the objections in G. Weiss, *Oströmische Beamte im Spiegel der Schriften des Michael Psellos* (Munich 1973), 255.

<sup>103</sup> A. Kambyles (ed.), *Symeoon Neos Theologos. Hymnen* (Berlin/New York 1976), 26–7 (edition; poems nrs. II to V), and pp. ccclviii–ccclxvii (manuscripts and commentary); for these poets, see also Kominis, *Βυζαντινὸν ἱερὸν ἐπίγραμμα*, 144–6.

<sup>104</sup> Symeon Neos Theologos, *Chapitres théologiques, gnostiques et pratiques*, ed. J. Darrouzès, SC 51bis (Paris 1996), 298.

<sup>105</sup> For this poet, see Kominis, *Βυζαντινὸν ἱερὸν ἐπίγραμμα*, 146–7.

<sup>106</sup> Westerink, *Poemata*, pp. 259, 270. For the authorship question, see below, pp. 280–4.

<sup>107</sup> Edited in: Psellos, *Or. min.*, p. 65 (after or. 17).

<sup>108</sup> G. Schirò, 'La schedografia a bisanzio nei sec. XI–XII e la scuola dei SS. XL Martiri', *Bolletino della badia greca di Grottaferrata* 3 (1949), 11–29.

poems can only loosely be dated to the eleventh or twelfth century. The poems are related to the school of the Forty Martyrs, and appear to have been written by a teacher of that school.

There are some poems that repeatedly turn up in the vicinity of eleventh-century poetic material but do not contain any indications allowing them to be dated or otherwise precisely identified. Notably, there is a series of recently edited poems in *Hauniensis* 1899 (thirteenth century) that are to be found together with eleventh-century poetry (Christophorea, Mauropodea, and pseudo-Pselliana).<sup>109</sup> A poem on the apostles, ascribed to Mauropous but in the companionship of several Christophorea in *Vindob. theol. gr.* 103, ascribed to Psellos in *Paris. gr.* 1782 and to other authors in other manuscripts, may perhaps simply be an anonymous inscription.<sup>110</sup> Some cycles of epigrams are equally difficult to date. Each epigram in these cycles has as its subject a religious feast or a biblical scene. In some manuscripts from around 1100 such a cycle can be found,<sup>111</sup> and *Marc. gr.* 524 contains a similar cycle.<sup>112</sup>

A considerable part of extant eleventh-century production of poetry is closely connected to the production of manuscripts. Many eleventh-century manuscripts contain so-called ‘book epigrams’, poems added to the manuscript by the scribe, patron, or reader, with various purposes. We discuss this genre later in this study. It is often hard to establish when and by whom book epigrams were composed. Book epigrams in eleventh-century manuscripts often reuse older verses and (parts of) poems. Some book epigrams are fixed formulae that occur in literally hundreds of manuscripts during the entire Byzantine era. Only a few poems seem to have been composed by contemporary authors. Such is the case for the epigrams of Markos the monk in the psalter *Bodl. Clarke* 15, although Markos

<sup>109</sup> J. Christensen, ‘Inedita from the MS. Hauniensis 1899’, *Βυζαντινά Σύμμεκτα* 21 (2011), 339–49.

<sup>110</sup> Inc. *Σταυρός Πέτρον κύβαλον*. Edited as pseudo-Psellos 90 in Westerink, *Poemata*; attributed to Christophoros in L. Sternbach, ‘Appendix Christophorea’, *Eos* 6 (1900), 53–74, here 68, and to Mauropous in *PG* 120, col. 1196.

<sup>111</sup> W. Hörandner, ‘Ein Zyklus von Epigrammen zu Darstellungen von Herrenfesten und Wunderszenen’, *DOP* 46 (1992), 107–15; P. Pagonari-Antoniou, ‘Τα βυζαντινά επιγράμματα των κωδίκων Βατοπεδίου 36, Marc. gr. 507 και Ζαγοράς 115’, *Δίπτυχα* 5 (1992), 33–58.

<sup>112</sup> W. Hörandner, ‘A Cycle of Epigrams on the Lord’s Feasts in Cod. Marc. gr. 524’, *DOP* 48 (1994), 117–33, for the dating (mid eleventh to twelfth century): 123.

also reuses some older verses.<sup>113</sup> Most Byzantine book epigrams have been edited in catalogues or elsewhere in descriptions of manuscripts, but are often incomplete or unsatisfactory.<sup>114</sup> A research team at Ghent University now aims to compile an online database including all Byzantine book epigrams.<sup>115</sup>

Apart from these book epigrams, there are many other inscriptions preserved in situ: that is, on buildings or objects of art. In the eleventh century, epigrams on reliquaries and crosses take the lion's share, but churches and city walls also bore inscriptions. The team working on the epigram project in Vienna, started by Wolfram Hörandner, is progressively publishing a complete corpus of Byzantine inscriptions.<sup>116</sup>

To what degree can we approach poetry from 1025 to 1081 as a distinct unity with respect to Byzantine poetry of other periods?<sup>117</sup> On the one hand, this poetry is firmly anchored in tradition and remains faithful to well established conventions. On the other hand, there are a few distinctive traits that can be discerned. Some genres flourished, especially didactic poetry. More than ever before in Byzantium, poems are devoted to public occasions and personal patronage projects. Metrical hierarchy seems to change: the *politikos stichos* expands in usage and is now also used for didactic poetry. Conversely,

<sup>113</sup> Edition of some of the poems in T. Gaisford, *Catalogus sive notitia manusciporum qui a cel. E. D. Clarke comparati in bibliotheca bodleiana adservantur* (Oxford 1812), 57–61 and R. Stefec, 'Anmerkungen zu weiteren Epigrammen in epigraphischer Auszeichnungsmajuskel', *Byz* 81 (2011), 326–61; see also M. Lauxtermann, 'The Perils of Travel: Mark the Monk and *Bodl. E.D. Clarke 15*', in: F. Bernard and K. Demoen (eds), *Poetry and its Contexts in Eleventh-century Byzantium* (Farnham/Burlington 2012), 195–206.

<sup>114</sup> The team in Ghent has provided an edition of some unedited epigrams in: K. Bentein, F. Bernard, K. Demoen, and M. De Groote, 'Book Epigrams in Honor of the Church Fathers. Some Inedita from the Eleventh Century', *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 49 (2009), 281–94; and: K. Bentein, F. Bernard, K. Demoen, and M. De Groote, 'New Testament Book Epigrams: Some New Evidence from the Eleventh Century', *BZ* 103 (2010), 13–23.

<sup>115</sup> K. Demoen et al., *A Database of Byzantine Book Epigrams*, <<http://www.dbbe.ugent.be>> (forthcoming).

<sup>116</sup> At the time of completion of this book the following volumes had been published: A. Rhoby (ed.), *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Fresken und Mosaiken*, *Byzantinische Epigramme in inschriftlicher Überlieferung 1* (Vienna 2009); and A. Rhoby (ed.), *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Ikonen und Objekten der Kleinkunst*, *Byzantinische Epigramme in inschriftlicher Überlieferung 2* (Vienna 2010).

<sup>117</sup> On this question, see W. Hörandner, 'La poésie profane au XIe siècle et la connaissance des auteurs anciens', *TM* 6 (1976), 245–63, esp. 246, 253–7.



ceremonial poems in *politikos stichos*, such as they appear before 1000 and after 1100, are entirely absent.<sup>118</sup> Mendicant poetry is absent as well, in contrast to the Komnenian period, which may have to do with the changing professional status of poets.<sup>119</sup>

It has already been remarked that from the eleventh century onwards, the individual personality of the poet becomes much more present, in a self-conscious and even slightly haughty manner.<sup>120</sup> Eleventh-century poetry contains a good deal of humour, wit, and sarcasm, features considered rare for (learned) Byzantine poetry. There is a touch of realism, of keen observation of the contemporary world, especially in Christophoros' poems.<sup>121</sup> Many poems concern the city of Constantinople: its buildings, festivals, and urban culture. Polemics and rivalries, although never entirely absent in Byzantine literary history, now take up a great deal of poetic energy. There is a marked penchant for displaying knowledge, notable in Psellos but also in the works of other poets.<sup>122</sup> In the following chapters, all these features and tendencies will appear frequently.

<sup>118</sup> M. Lauxtermann, *The Spring of Rhythm. An Essay on the Political Verse and Other Byzantine Metres* (Vienna 1999), 28, n. 37, for monodies in *politikos stichos*.

<sup>119</sup> For 1100 as a caesura in the patronage of poetry, see also M. Lauxtermann, 'La poesia', in: G. Cavallo (ed.), *Lo spazio letterario del medioevo 3. Le culture circostanti, vol. I: La cultura bizantina* (Rome 2004), 301–44, here at 305–6.

<sup>120</sup> Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 38; see also Kazhdan, *Change*, 225–7.

<sup>121</sup> N. Oikonomides, 'Life and Society in Eleventh-Century Constantinople', *Südost-Forschungen* 49 (1990), 1–19.

<sup>122</sup> On this tendency, see Kazhdan, *Change*, 210.

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## Concepts

In the introductory chapter, we have argued that it is worthwhile to reconsider the customary terms we naturally use to refer to Byzantine literature: ‘poetry’ and ‘literature’, and, correspondingly, ‘poets’ and ‘authors’. They imply mental representations and assumptions that do not always correspond to the ways in which Byzantines themselves defined or conceptualized their texts, and thus distort our view on the aesthetics of Byzantine texts.

First of all, for us, the terms ‘literature’ and ‘poetry’ refer to an artistic achievement, something that is created with the conscious intent of contributing to ‘art’. And however people want to define ‘art’, in most usages art is conceived as having a value that exceeds the immediate function of the artistic object or text. Direct functionality stands for us in opposition to ‘literariness’. Hence, when we use the term ‘poet’ or ‘author’ for someone who creates texts, we in fact assume that this person held a distinctly artistic concept of what he was doing, that he felt connected with his fellow artists, past and present, and that he was conscious of working within a tradition that honoured ‘beautiful’ works.

Alexander Kazhdan made this all the more explicit by making a firm division between ‘literature’ and ‘other texts’ in Byzantium.<sup>1</sup> Kazhdan, undoubtedly influenced by Russian formalism, defined *littérarité* (or ‘superinformation’) as the surplus of stylistic devices (the ‘play of form’) operating upon a text.<sup>2</sup> *How* something is said can

<sup>1</sup> A. Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature (650–850)* (Athens 1999), 1–4. See also A. Kazhdan and G. Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium* (Washington DC 1982), 98–9.

<sup>2</sup> Compare R. Jakobson, *Questions de poétique* (Paris 1973), esp. 15 and 486 for definitions of this *littérarité* (*literaturnost*).

make a text literature. It is clear that not every reader of Byzantine texts shares this view. Mullett was sceptical whether such a division is tenable.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, there are Byzantinists who have taken a different perspective on the act of ‘creating’ texts, regarding this practice as the extension of reading and compilation practices. In this view, ‘composing’ a text is often the same as assembling other, older texts. This leads us to question the features that we associate with the act of creating literature (originality, personal expression, etc.).<sup>4</sup>

In our perception, poetry belongs par excellence to the realm of literature. We tend to associate it with dense language, lyricism, personal expression, etc. It disturbs us when these elements seem absent, when it seems that all that constitutes poetry is just the form. Moreover, the lyric, dramatic, and epic elements, traditionally used to divide and define poetry, are largely absent. Instead, the content of a Byzantine poem seems above all determined by its social function.<sup>5</sup> Hence, doubts have arisen whether many Byzantine texts in verse deserve the name ‘poetry’ at all.

The few attempts to describe Byzantine ‘poetics’ have limited themselves to some stylistic features in poetic diction that allegedly set it apart from prosaic diction. When Thomas Conley examined the ‘poetics’ (sic) of Byzantine poetry,<sup>6</sup> he mainly focused on stylistic features that are certainly not confined to poetry (the frequent use of anaphora, for example), or on effects that result from the simple formal fact that poetry is a text that is laid out vertically on the page

<sup>3</sup> M. Mullett, ‘New Literary History and the History of Byzantine Literature: A Worthwhile Endeavour?’ in: P. Odorico and P. Agapitos (eds), *Pour une «nouvelle» histoire de la littérature byzantine. Actes du colloque international philologique. Nicosie, 25–28 mai 2000* (Paris 2002), 37–60, esp. 48–9. See also J. S. Codoñer, ‘La diffusion envisagée par l’auteur pour son oeuvre comme guide pour un classement de la littérature à Byzance aux IXe et Xe siècles’, in: P. Odorico (ed.), *La face cachée de la littérature byzantine. Le texte en tant que message immédiat* (Paris 2012), 87–122, at 87–91.

<sup>4</sup> For the ‘composition’ of poetry, see P. Odorico, ‘Poésies à la marge. Réflexions personnelles?’, in: F. Bernard and K. Demoen (eds), *Poetry and its Contexts in Eleventh-century Byzantium* (Farnham/Burlington 2012), 207–24.

<sup>5</sup> W. Hörandner, ‘Poetry and Romances’, in: E. Jeffreys, J. Haldon, R. Cormack (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies* (Oxford 2008), 894–906, at 894–5.

<sup>6</sup> T. Conley, ‘Practice to Theory: Byzantine “Poetics”’, in: J. Abbenes, S. Slings, and I. Sluiter (eds), *Greek Literary Theory after Aristotle: A Collection of Papers in Honour of D.M. Schenkeveld* (Amsterdam 1995), 301–20. S. Averincev, *Poëtika rannevizantijskoj literatury* (Moscow 1977), trans. P. C. Bori, *L’anima e lo specchio. L’universo della poetica bizantina* (Bologna 1988), is not an analysis of poetry alone, and the poetry that is treated, is predominantly liturgical poetry.

(acrostics, for example). Other comments on the motivations for Byzantines to use verse form are grounded in our notions of what 'poetic' means. When, for example, Symeon the New Theologian turned to verse to write down his mystical experiences after having written in prose, this is linked to the 'intensity of the subject'.<sup>7</sup> A poem of Theodoros Prodromos is commended as a 'hidden gem' because features are spotted (such as enjambments) that may appeal to our poetic sensibilities, but that can be said to run counter to Byzantine expectations.<sup>8</sup> But as Ingela Nilsson warns, verse in Byzantium is not what makes a text 'literary' or 'poetic' (poetic in our perception of the term).<sup>9</sup> And for didactic poetry, Lauxtermann observes that the poetic form does not entail much more than what it is, namely, a formal structuring element.<sup>10</sup>

It is thus clear that we have to reconsider the implications of our terminology when we refer to these texts as 'literature' or 'poetry'. This chapter approaches this question by looking at the contemporary discourse of the Byzantines. In what ways did the Byzantines themselves view, define, and value the act of reading and writing poetry? What associations did they make with the category of 'poet' and the practice of writing poetry? How did they regard the place of poetry relative to the full range of 'discursive practices' (to use a quite neutral general term)? Finally, I will take a closer look at the notion of

<sup>7</sup> J. Koder, 'Ο Συμμεών ο Νέος Θεολόγος και οι Ύμνοι του', in: A. Markopoulos (ed.), *Τέσσερα κείμενα για την ποίηση του Συμμεών του Νέου Θεολόγου* (Athens 2008), 1–36. See also U. Criscuolo, 'Poesia e poetica negli Inni di Simeone il Nuovo Teologo', in: U. Criscuolo and R. Maisano (eds), *La poesia bizantina. Atti della terza Giornata di studi bizantini sotto il patrocinio della Associazione Italiana di Studi Bizantini (Macerata, 11–12 maggio 1993)* (Naples 1995), 55–77, and especially 59–60 for the question of poeticality and self-expression.

<sup>8</sup> M. Bazzani, 'Theodore Prodromos' Poem LXXVII', *BZ* 100 (2007), 1–12. For the aversion of Byzantine verse towards enjambment, see M. Lauxtermann, *The Spring of Rhythm. An Essay on the Political Verse and Other Byzantine Metres* (Vienna 1999), 73.

<sup>9</sup> I. Nilsson, 'Discovering Literariness in the Past: Literature vs. History in the *Synopsis Chronike* of Konstantinos Manasses', in: P. Odorico, P. Agapitos and M. Hinterberger (eds), *L'écriture de la mémoire. La littérature de l'historiographie. Actes du IIIe colloque international philologique. Nicosie, 6–7–8 mai 2004* (Paris 2006), 15–31, here at 17.

<sup>10</sup> M. Lauxtermann, 'Byzantine Didactic Poetry and the Question of Poeticality', in: P. Odorico, M. Hinterberger and P. Agapitos (eds), *«Doux remède...» Poésie et poétique à Byzance. Actes du IVe colloque international philologique, Paris, 23–24–25 février 2006* (Paris 2009), 37–46. See also below, 229–32.

poetic tradition in Byzantium, and the consciousness of the literary past and future.

The observations and conclusions that will be made here may appear self-evident to many readers of Byzantine literature. But they have seldom been discussed in full. Moreover, while the observations are limited to the eleventh century, the conclusions might also be applied to other centuries. This limited time frame allows me to avoid sweeping together testimonies from different periods of time, when different historical and cultural factors perhaps brought about different views and concepts of poetry and literature.

### 2.1. WRITING POETRY: CONTEMPORARY EVIDENCE

The eleventh century is rich in texts that describe intellectuals and their accomplishments. Psellos in particular frequently emphasizes his own intellectual achievements, going to great lengths to present himself as a competent philosopher, orator, and teacher. He also boasts about the many texts he has ‘composed’, which treated many disciplines of learning.<sup>11</sup> Yet Psellos is silent about his poetic production, he never singles out his poems as poems, and he never uses the word ‘poet’ to refer to himself. Likewise, one might expect Psellos, in his oration in honour of his teacher and fellow poet Mauropous, to refer to the poetic works of his friend. Psellos does deal in considerable detail with the stylistic characteristics of Mauropous’ writing, and he does mention his skills as a persuasive orator and his knowledge of epistolographic models.<sup>12</sup> But he does not say a word about his poetic production, nor does he ever call his teacher a ‘poet’ or compare him with another poet. Hence, we cannot possibly maintain that these two friends, who, seen from our perspective, dominate the poetic production of the eleventh century, considered each other as ‘fellow poets’. Also, in his funeral orations for his pupils, Psellos often describes their authorial activities (we will return to this shortly), mentioning many works they wrote in various genres. But nowhere

<sup>11</sup> See for example Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VI, §42–3.

<sup>12</sup> Psellos, *Or. pan.* 17.243–64.

does he mention specifically that any of these students wrote poetry. The same holds true for Mauroπους' portraits of his intellectual friends.<sup>13</sup>

This has some important consequences. We can legitimately state that contemporaries were remarkably reticent about the writing of poetry as an activity isolated from other intellectual occupations, and apparently those men we know as 'poets' did not describe themselves as such (although they certainly did not keep silent about their intellectual and authorial practices as a whole). There is no conscious reflection about the contemporary aesthetic and ideological dynamics of poetry. Hence, there is no poetic 'field'; and when we discuss the social dynamics of people who wrote poetry, we will have to consider these rather as features of the field of 'intellectuals'.

The following testimonies should be regarded as exceptions to the rule: they, unusually, do indeed single out eleventh-century Byzantines as engaging in the writing of poetry. One of them is to be found in Psellos' funeral oration for the patriarch Michael Keroularios (who died in 1058). At a certain point, Psellos sketches the different inclinations of the young Michael and his brother: the latter was more sociable and astute, while the future patriarch was introverted and directed towards higher things. When describing their years as students, Psellos has this to comment:

*He [Michael] held rather on to prose, but his older brother devoted himself to rhythms and metres. Both also pronounced orations for some deceased people. As for the men who sacrificed themselves to God, they not only made icons of them, but they also adorned those icons with words and epigrams.<sup>14</sup>*

This passage, exceptionally, singles out a particular person's preference for writing in verse. It is, for that matter, also exceptional in that it mentions another individual's preference for writing in prose. The division between prose and poetry in any event does not imply that the works they composed had different functions: Psellos tells us that

<sup>13</sup> As, for instance, in the funeral poems: Mauroπους 35–9.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Psellos, *Oratio funebris in Michael Cerularium*, in: K. Sathas (ed.), *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη* (Venice/Paris 1876), IV, 303–87, here at 312.2–6: ἀλλ' οὗτος μὲν τοῦ πεζοῦ μᾶλλον εἶχετο λόγου, ὁ δὲ γε πρεσβύτερος ἀδελφὸς ῥυθμοῖς ἑαυτὸν ἐπεδίδου καὶ μέτροις· καὶ προσειρήκασί γε ἄμφω τῶν ἀποθανόντων ἐπίους, καὶ τῶν γε καθοσιωσάντων ἑαυτοῦς τῷ θεῷ οὐκ εἰκόνας ἐπεποίητο μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ταύτας λόγοις ἐκόσμων καὶ ἐπιγράμμασι.

they both wrote funeral orations and composed epigrams and other *logoi* for icons of saints. Consequently, the division is purely between forms. They wrote for the same occasions, but the one chose verse while the other preferred to write in prose. Psellos seems to relate this divergence to the characters of both young brothers: the inclination of Michael's brother to write in poetry is linked to his more extrovert and sociable way of life.

The last sentence of the passage quoted above raises some questions: when Psellos makes the distinction between *λόγοις* and *ἐπιγράμμασι*, both said to adorn icons, does he mean a distinction between prose and poetry? Or does he differentiate between physical inscriptions and poems without inscriptional basis, oral speeches perhaps (the funeral orations are explicitly said to have been 'pronounced')? Or does he suppose that the one distinction entails the other—in other words, that inscriptions were expected to have been written in verse and oral speeches in prose? Be that as it may, the authorial practices of both brothers (regardless of their propensity for the poetic form or not) encompass both oral and written 'texts', and texts both for social occasions and for religious objects.

Another person mentioned by contemporaries as having written poetry is, perhaps surprisingly, the emperor Michael VII Doukas. In his *Chronographia*, Psellos describes his duties as tutor to the young Michael. He mentions the 'poetic treatment of discourse' (*ἢ ποιητικὴ τοῦ λόγου κατασκευή*)<sup>15</sup> as part of the studies of his imperial pupil, also giving this opinion of his skills:

*While not observing the metrical structure (μέτρον) of iambs, he did compose some of them, and while mostly not hitting the rhythm right, he managed to produce a sound meaning.*<sup>16</sup>

Iambs (dodecasyllables) are singled out because these are obviously the dominant metre. The term *μέτρον* probably refers to the prosodical structure of the iambic trimeter: apparently, the emperor composed accentual dodecasyllables, without paying too much attention to the prosodical constraints. The word *ῥυθμός*, in turn, likely refers

<sup>15</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VIIc, §4, l. 5–6.

<sup>16</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VIIc, §4, l. 23–5: *Ἰάμβων δὲ μὴ προσχὸν μέτροις σχεδιάζει τούτους, εἰ καὶ μὴ ἐπιτυγάνων τὰ πολλὰ τοῦ ῥυθμοῦ, ἀλλ' ὑγαίνουσιν τὴν ἔννοιαν ἐκδιδούς.*

to the accentual rhythm.<sup>17</sup> It is telling that, while Michael is considered an excellent pupil, his handling of prosody (and perhaps rhythm) was not impeccable. Correct prosodical versification must have been considered one of the most difficult elements of someone's poetical education.

Michael's dalliance with poetry is also treated by the historiographer commonly called Scylitzes Continuatus. But his perspective is radically different:

*When the barbarians were plundering the eastern regions, and people either died or fled to Constantinople, the situation needed a regulating and experienced great-hearted mind, but he [Michael] was so sparing and penurious that he did not want to give away an obol or supply anyone with whatsoever, or to take care of the supplies of food by transporting them with animals or provision-ships. Instead, he continually devoted himself to the vain and useless study of rhetoric and the composition of iambs and anapaests, although he had not acquainted himself with this discipline spontaneously, but, deceived and beguiled by the consul of philosophers, he brought the world to rack and ruin, so to speak. A powerful famine arose, followed by plague and deaths, companions for the ruin of men. And many died every day, so that the living could not bury the dead.*<sup>18</sup>

So much for the prestige that poetry enjoyed among the elite: here, it is portrayed as nothing more or less than the cause of famine and of the decay of the empire. It is perhaps not accidental that the historian singles out poetry to highlight the emperor's negligence: to his mind, no doubt, poetry counted as a particularly vain and frivolous activity. But leaving aside the ideological fault line that runs between these two authors, they both testify to Michael's aspiration to compose poetry, herein guided, for better or for worse, by the consul of philosophers, Michael Psellos.

Michael Doukas' initiation into poetry by Psellos is also reflected in Psellos' poem on grammar (poem 6), dedicated and addressed to the imperial prince. Between the explanations of verb tenses and aspirations, there are some guidelines about metrical matters (6.92–100).

<sup>17</sup> For the ambiguity of the term *ῥυθμός*, M. Lauxtermann, 'The Velocity of Pure Iambs. Byzantine Observations on the Metre and Rhythm of the Dodecasyllable', *JÖB* 48 (1998), 9–33.

<sup>18</sup> Skylitzes Continuatus, *Ἡ συνέχεια τῆς Χρονογραφίας τοῦ Ἰωάννου Σκυλίτζη*, ed. T. Tzolakis (Thessaloniki 1968), 171, l. 1–13.



Psellos mainly enumerates some of the more important metrical feet, giving short indications on their basic structure. This ‘very short introduction’ to metrics reflects the theoretical knowledge such as it circulated in contemporary grammatical manuscripts. Poetry is in this context just an early phase of the educational curriculum.<sup>19</sup>

Christophoros’ poem 27 is another rare text that explicitly refers to a contemporary Byzantine writing poetry. It gives us at the same time an idea of the Byzantine conceptualization of intellectual activities. The poem is an encomiastic, even adulatory, piece in honour of Niketas of Synada. This Niketas is a friend of the poet, probably identical with Niketas ὁ φιλόσοφος, the addressee of poems 43 and 100, but he is otherwise unknown to us.<sup>20</sup> Just as with poem 100, poem 27 is a request for Niketas not to remain silent, but to let Christophoros partake of his beautiful words. It begins thus (vv. 1–6):<sup>21</sup>

*Εἰς τὸν μοναχὸν Νικήταν τὸν Συναδῶν*  
*Ἡ ζῶσα πολλοῖς ἐν πόλει γνώσις πάλαι*  
*ἐν σοὶ μόνῳ ζῆ καὶ σαλεύει, Νικήτα·*  
*κἄν εἰς στενὸν γὰρ ἤλασαν νῦν οἱ λόγοι,*  
*ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐνεκρώθησαν οὔμενον ὄλωσ,*  
*λιπόντος αὐτοῖς ζώπυρον τοῦ δεσπότητος* 5  
*σέ, ζωτικὸν πνέοντα πνεῦμα τῆς τέχνης.*

*For the monk Niketas of Synada*

*The knowledge (gnōsis) that formerly lived in many here in the city*  
*now lives and vibrates only in you, Niketas;*  
*for although learning (hoi logoi) is now driven into a corner,*  
*it has by no means died out completely,*  
*since the Lord has left them a spark:* 5  
*you, breathing the life-bringing spirit of the art (techne).*

The vocabulary used here to describe Niketas’ abilities reveals the indeterminateness of some categories used by the Byzantines to refer

<sup>19</sup> See also below, 213–22.

<sup>20</sup> F. Lauritzen, ‘An Ironic Portrait of a Social Monk: Christopher of Mytilene and Niketas Stethatos’, *BSI* 65 (2007), 201–10, proposes to identify Niketas Synadenos with Niketas Stethatos. I will not adopt this identification here, because I believe that a surname cannot be swapped so easily, because little specific information can be gained from the praises for Niketas in Christophoros 27, and because there might be more people named Niketas in eleventh-century Byzantium who could be authors.

<sup>21</sup> Kurtz and De Groote read τῶν Συναδῶν in the title, together with the Grottaferrata manuscript, but the reading τὸν Συναδῶν, found in another manuscript, is preferable.

to intellectual activities that we tend to neatly separate from each other. Christophoros tells us that *hoi logoi* were neglected before Niketas entered the scene (a *topos* to which we should not attach too much historical importance). In the first verse, the term *hoi logoi* seems to imply knowledge (*gnōsis*), but in the last verse, it is specified that *techne* is the thing in which Niketas excels, undoubtedly to be understood as rhetoric (*ῥητορικὴ τέχνη*). Both theoretical *gnosis* and practical *techne* function as two sides of the same coin, namely *hoi logoi*. The image of *hoi logoi*, portrayed in the first lines as being driven into a corner, implies a broad social and cultural phenomenon. ‘Intellectual culture’ might be the best translation for *hoi logoi* in this context.<sup>22</sup>

The ambiguity of the term *hoi logoi* is exploited in the following lines (vv. 7–9):

ἄρμωσθε τοῖνυν τὴν σοφὴν σύριγγά σου  
καὶ πάντα ἔλκε τοῖς λόγοις, λόγων φίλε,  
ὡς ἄλλος Ὀρφεὺς τῇ λύρᾳ τὰ θηρία.

*So, tune your wise flute,  
and attract everyone with your words, friend of words,  
like another Orpheus attracting animals with the lyre.*

Niketas is here said to be able to attract others with the help of *hoi logoi*, which here refers to (rhetorically attractive) words or texts. The second instance of *λόγοις*, in the expression *λόγων φίλε*, appears, conversely, more as a social and cultural term (as it was used in v. 3): a lover of learning, an intellectual, as opposed to ordinary people.

When subsequently Christophoros asks Niketas to ‘send lightnings from his lips, letting the manna of his knowledge rain down furiously’,<sup>23</sup> he represents Niketas’ words as the rhetorical expression of knowledge acquired through study. The combination of eloquence and wisdom suggests that Christophoros here praises Niketas’ excellence as a teacher, letting others partake of his knowledge in a manner that is accessible and agreeable.

In the lines that follow, Christophoros implies that these abilities made him a renowned and sought-after person. Social success and

<sup>22</sup> See C. Crimi, *Cristoforo di Mitilene. Canzoniere* (Catania 1983), 73: ‘la cultura letteraria’.

<sup>23</sup> Christophoros 27.13–14: *λάλων τε πέμπων ἀστραπὰς ἐκ χειλέων//καὶ γνώσεως τὸ μάννα ῥαγδαίως ὕων.*

good reputation are a direct consequence of excellence in *hoi logoi*. The following line, *τίς πᾶν λόγων ἤθροισε κάλλος ἐκ νέου;* (v. 21) shows again how indeterminate the meanings of *λόγοι* can be. We may wonder whether this should be understood as ‘who collected anew all the beauty of literary culture [in his own works]?’ or as ‘who excerpted all the beauty from [existing] books?’ The truth of the matter may very well be that in the eyes of the Byzantines there was not a great difference. Intellectuals of this kind read and excerpted books not only to teach methods or make compilations, but also to apply this rhetorical know-how in practice when composing their own texts. Both activities amounted to ‘occupying oneself with *hoi logoi*’.

The following lines exalt Niketas as the best among monks as well as among the wise. Then, in the midst of an again rather heterogeneous enumeration of virtues, there is a short but telling observation about his poetic activities (vv. 29–32):

*τίνος γέμουσιν αἱ πόλεις συγγραμμάτων;*  
*τίνος στίχους φέρουσιν οἱ θεῖοι δόμοι;* 30  
*τίνος δὲ πάντες καὶ νέοι καὶ πρεσβύται*  
*ἐπικροτοῦσι συγγραφαῖς ἢ σοῦ μόνου;*

*With whose writings are the cities filled?*  
*Whose verses do the divine houses carry?* 30  
*Whose writings are applauded by both young and old*  
*if not these of yours?*

The verses of Niketas that are said to be carried in or on the churches must refer to epigrams inscribed on religious images in the church, or perhaps on the exterior of the building. The fact that Niketas was able to have his verses inscribed in churches is here clearly a mark of his success. Apparently, one of the tasks attached to his status as an intellectual was that of providing epigrams for religious images. Mauropous and Christophoros did the same (as did the brother of Michael Keroularios, as we have seen); it was one of the discursive practices that filled a real practical need.

In this poem, poetic production appears as an integral component of ‘writings’, scarcely distinguishable from other components. These writings, in turn, constitute one of the general qualities of an intellectual: his knowledge, his rhetorical skills, his teaching abilities, perhaps also his expedient excerpting of books; in short, his excellence in *hoi logoi*. Niketas is not hailed as a poet, but rather as a wise man in general, a teacher, and an orator of high repute. His

inscriptions in verse are but one example amongst a number which give proof of this.

We may note that the three ‘poets’ presented here who are explicitly mentioned in contemporary sources as such—that is, Michael VII Doukas, an unnamed brother of Michael Keroularios, and a certain Niketas Synadenos—are not the poets whose poems survive (unless some anonymous poems transmitted to us are their work). Consequently, we have to assume that many more people wrote poetry than the poets known to us by name. What we have is but the tip of the iceberg. We may even suppose that *every* student receiving complete studies from a competent teacher would compose poetry at some point in his school career. But none of them would have considered this as an independent activity or as an achievement that was meant to survive over time. This may have consequences for the many attributions of anonymously transmitted poems to known poets. Scholars have always tended to prefer clarity to chaos, and they are keen to connect loose ends. They also often seem to assume that only a very narrow elite can be credited with the status of ‘poet’. By contrast, I see no compelling need to try to connect anonymous poems with poets who happen to be known to us. In my view, the production of poetry is more fugitive, fragmented, and extensive than we conceive it.

Another observation can be made on the basis of these testimonies. There seem to be two contexts in which poetry comes to be mentioned explicitly: namely, education, and epigrams on religious objects. I would take these two contexts, or social occasions, to be the ones most likely to induce the writing of poetry. Chapters 6 (Education) and 8 (Patronage) will further elaborate on this point.

## 2.2. POETRY, *HOI LOGOI*, AND RHETORIC

As we have seen, the usual term used by the Byzantines to refer to contemporary discursive practices is *hoi logoi*. As Christophoros’ poem 27 has shown, it can, in fact, refer to both a passive form of intellectual occupation (the books that are read) and to an active form (actual writing of works); it can encompass prose and poetry, rhetoric and science.

A similar wide-ranging use of the term *hoi logoi* is present in other texts. When Psellos makes an excursus about *hoi logoi* in a passage in his *Chronographia* (book VI, §37–43), he divides it in two parts: rhetoric and philosophy. In typical Psellian parlance, the former makes the latter more accessible. Psellos here deals with a number of different things: clearly not just the creation of texts, but also the study of books, and the mediation of knowledge contained in those books.<sup>24</sup> When he says about himself that he ‘blossomed in *hoi logoi*’,<sup>25</sup> he does not mean that he is the foremost *author* in Byzantium; rather, he describes himself as an excellent teacher, familiar with many different disciplines of knowledge. In some instances, the aspect of teaching even dominates in the definition of *hoi logoi*. When Psellos states in a letter to a friend that he is the one who ‘has adorned Constantinople with *logoi*’, it is clear from the rest of the letter that he intends first and foremost his activities as a teacher, treating all fields of knowledge in both an understandable and a complete manner.<sup>26</sup>

These intellectual activities encompass all fields of human and exact sciences. When in a funeral oration for a student Psellos describes the achievements of the deceased, he first describes the student’s intellectual abilities in general terms, as ‘occupation with *hoi logoi*’,<sup>27</sup> and his excellence in ‘all parts of *hoi logoi*’.<sup>28</sup> These parts are further specified as *ῥητορικὴ* (146.20), *φιλοσοφία* (146.19), law (146.25), and exact sciences: geometry (148.21), astrology/astronomy (23), arithmetic (23), and music (24). The fact that this pupil had himself composed works is also mentioned briefly (153.13–15).

But the concept of *hoi logoi* goes further than this. In the encomium on his mother, which is more or less an autobiography, Psellos calls his intellectual predilection ‘the study of *hoi logoi*’,<sup>29</sup> also choosing

<sup>24</sup> I do not, therefore, think that the translation ‘umane lettere’ in *Michele Psello. Imperatori di Bisanzio (Cronografia)*, ed. S. Impellizzeri; introd. D. Del Corno; comm. U. Criscuolo; trans. S. Ronchey. 5th ed. (Milan 2005), I, 287, satisfactorily covers the expression *hoi logoi* in book VI, §41; neither does ‘literature’ in R. Sewter (trans.), *Michael Psellus. Chronographia* (New York 1966), 129.

<sup>25</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VIIa, §7, l. 3–4.

<sup>26</sup> Psellos, *Ep. Sathas* 198, p. 491.26–492.8: οἱ τὴν Πόλιν τοῖς λόγοις κοσμήσαντες.

<sup>27</sup> Psellos, *Scripta Minora*, I, 146.1: ταῖς περὶ τοὺς λόγους μελέταις.

<sup>28</sup> Psellos, *Scripta Minora*, I, 146.15: πᾶσι τοῖς τοῦ λόγου μέρεσιν.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Psellos, *Oratio funebris in matrem*, ed. U. Criscuolo, *Autobiografia. Encomio per la madre* (Naples 1989), l. 292: ἡ περὶ τοὺς λόγους σπουδῆ.

to make ‘a living out of *hoi logoi*’.<sup>30</sup> And in a poem, he asserts that ‘*hoi logoi* were my concern, my care, my life’.<sup>31</sup> *Hoi logoi* is a consciously conceived social space. It is a lifestyle, putting a badge on a person. At the same time, it potentially refers to, or connotes, the concrete core of this social and cultural world: texts.

Poem 40 of Christophoros, upbraiding someone who is making vain intellectual presumptions, is exemplary for the ambiguous use of the term *hoi logoi*. According to the title the poem targets a ‘commoner who had compared the *logoi* of wise men’. *Logoi* is here clearly used in the meaning of ‘writings’, ‘texts’. But when Christophoros jokingly advises him to start at the bottom of the hierarchy, he says: ‘become first a squire in *hoi logoi*’ (v. 10), *logoi* here conceived as a social and cultural space that was hierarchically organized. Thereafter, Christophoros laments the success of *agroikia*, which reigns everywhere, and ‘accuses knowledge and *hoi logoi* of being of no use’ (vv. 32–4). *Hoi logoi* is used here again as a general term to sum up everything that has to do with the culture and education of the intellectual elite. It is used in the same sense when Christophoros laments the sorry state of the ‘friends of *hoi logoi*’, who are trampled upon (v. 45). Here, *hoi logoi* takes the form of a cultural notion, making a distinction between those people who are educated and refined and those who are not. By consequence, someone who is active in *hoi logoi* is a *logios*, or more often a ‘friend of *hoi logoi*’. It is generally in these terms that contemporary intellectuals describe themselves, and not in more specific terms referring to active authorship (such as ‘orator’, ‘writer’, or the like).

There is a second factor that makes it difficult to single out the practice of writing poetry from discursive practices as a whole. Everything that is related to the production of texts (style, disposition of content, genre, etc.) is considered under the aegis of rhetoric. It is in terms of rhetorical theory that Byzantines tended to discuss the technical or formal aspects of texts we call ‘literary’ or ‘poetic’. This is evident in one of the rare texts that has meta-poetical content: the essay by Psellos entitled ‘Who versified better, Euripides or Georgios Pisides?’<sup>32</sup> In this work, Psellos describes the metrical and stylistic

<sup>30</sup> Psellos, *Oratio funebris in matrem*, l. 298–9: ἐμοὶ δὲ δυσχερὲς ἦν ἄλλως, καὶ μὲχρις ἀκοῆς, ἄλλο τι πρὸ τῶν λόγων ἐμπορεύεσθαι.

<sup>31</sup> Psellos 16.2.

<sup>32</sup> Michael Psellos, *The Essays on Euripides and George of Pisidia and on Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius*, ed. A. Dyck (Vienna 1986).

features of both poets, using predominantly rhetorical terminology.<sup>33</sup> For Psellos, it is rhetoric (ὁ ῥητορικὸς λόγος), and, more specifically, the different *ideai* (the ‘styles’ of rhetorical theory), that influenced the choice and treatment of ‘rhythms’.<sup>34</sup> It is in this context that Psellos comments on the *poikilia* of metres that are used, the switching to other dialects, etc. In fact, it is difficult to extract any firm statements on metre or rhythm, not in the least due to the fact that the words ῥυθμός and μέτρον seem to be used quite indiscriminately.<sup>35</sup> Psellos is aware that the iambic trimeter has changed in its history, remarking that it now ‘jumps over every metrical unit and flies over every rhythm’, and that it searches for the quality of εὐκροτον, probably referring to accentual patterns.<sup>36</sup> But it is in vain that we will search in this work for anything that even remotely resembles a ‘poetics’. As Lauxtermann remarks: ‘Poetry is not the issue here, versification is.’<sup>37</sup>

This is corroborated by Psellos’ assessment of the wise man par excellence for the Byzantines, Gregory of Nazianzos. Psellos praises the Church Father on many occasions, and the theologian is also the subject of a separate treatise about his rhetorical style.<sup>38</sup> In this work, Psellos also very briefly draws attention to Gregory’s poetry, or, rather, his use of rhythm as demonstrated in his poetry:

*Further, if he adapts himself to poems, as to a lyre, he comprises everything in a rhythm that is not unbridled, such as many of the rhetors used it, but rather [a rhythm] of a more restrained kind.*<sup>39</sup>

<sup>33</sup> M. Lauxtermann, ‘The Velocity of Pure Iambs. Byzantine Observations on the Metre and Rhythm of the Dodecasyllable’, *JÖB* 48 (1998), 9–33, esp. 22–5.

<sup>34</sup> Psellos, *Essays* (ed. Dyck), l. 29.

<sup>35</sup> Lauxtermann, ‘Velocity’, 28–33.

<sup>36</sup> Psellos, *Essays* (ed. Dyck), p. 40, l. 19–20. An interpretation and translation of this passage in Lauxtermann, ‘Velocity’, 31.

<sup>37</sup> Lauxtermann, ‘Velocity’, 29.

<sup>38</sup> Michael Psellos, *De characteri rhetorico Gregorii Nazianzeni*, ed. A. Mayer, ‘Psellos’ Rede über den rhetorischen Charakter des Gregorios von Nazianz’, *BZ* 20 (1911), 27–100. For Psellos’ admiration for Gregory, especially on a rhetorical level, see S. Papaioannou, ‘Η μίμηση στη ρητορική θεωρία του Μιχαήλ Ψελλού’, in: C. Angelidi (ed.), *Το Βυζάντιο ώριμο για αλλαγές. Επιλογές, εναισθησίες και τρόποι έκφρασης από τον εδέκατο στον δέκατο πέμπτο αιώνα* (Athens 2004), 87–98; and id., *Michael Psellos: Rhetoric and Authorship in Byzantium* (Cambridge/New York 2013), 51–127.

<sup>39</sup> Psellos, *De characteri Gregorii*, l. 218–21: ἔπειτα ὡσπερ πρὸς λύραν ἀρμόσας αὐτῶ τὰ ποιήματα, ῥυθμῶ πάντα περιλαμβάνει οὐ τῶ ἀκολάστως, ᾧ πολλοὶ τῶν ῥητόρων ἐχρήσαντο, ἀλλὰ τῶ σωφρονεστάτῃ.

Surprisingly enough, even though Psellos is talking here about poetry specifically, he uses the term ‘rhetor’ to refer to other poets, who are here negatively compared to Gregory. This fits the scope of this short treatise, which is a discussion of rhetorical style. The treatment of rhythm in poetic texts is nothing more than a small part of this. Poetry is seen merely as a sub-field of rhetoric. From that perspective, the term ‘rhythm’, as in the essay on Euripides and Pisides, is not straightforward: does Psellos mean ‘accentual rhythm’, ‘prosody’, or a component of style such as it is often discussed in rhetorical theory?

A similar picture emerges from the terminology used in Anon. Sola 1. In this poem, we follow a company of friends on a boat trip on the Bosphorus, reciting to each other ‘the flowers of *logoi*’ (v. 35).<sup>40</sup> These flowers consist of ‘beats of iambs, rhythms of epics, and metres of tragedians, rhetors, and prose authors’ (vv. 36–7: *κρότους ἰάμβων, τῶν ἐπῶν εὐρυθμίας//μέτρα τραγωδῶν, ῥητόρων λογογράφων*). Iambs, epic verses, and tragic poetry are explicitly mentioned: it is clearly poetry that is being read here. But two more species of authors are added: ‘rhetors’ and ‘prose authors’ (*λογογράφοι*), and apparently their *metra* were also being read. The word *metron* cannot primarily refer to verse here, but rather to the rhythmical periods of rhetorical prose.<sup>41</sup> The transition between rhythmical prose and poetry proper is barely made: notions such as *ῥυθμός*, *μέτρον*, and the like are used for both. While this poem is still an exceptional case in that it singles out poetry as a separate class of texts read by contemporaries, it is clear that this refined company read both poetry and prose, and appreciated both because of their agreeable rhythm. It is not so much the distinction between verse and prose that matters, it is the enjoyment of rhythm, present in both. The collapse of the boundaries between rhetoric and poetry is of course a process that had long been developing in Greek literature.<sup>42</sup> And from the seventh century onwards, the language of newly produced poetry shed the convoluted poetic *Hochsprache* and became more and more similar to that of prose.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> See below, 99–101.

<sup>41</sup> M. Lauxtermann, ‘Byzantine Poetry in Context’, in: P. Odorico and P. Agapitos (eds), *Pour une «nouvelle» histoire de la littérature byzantine. Actes du colloque international philologique, Nicosie, 25–28 mai 2000* (Paris 2002), 139–52, here at 151.

<sup>42</sup> J. Walker, *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity* (Oxford/New York 2000).

<sup>43</sup> R. Browning, ‘The Language of Byzantine Literature’, in: S. Vryonis (ed.), *The Past in Medieval and Modern Greek Culture* (Malibu 1978), 103–33, here 114.



This situation continues into our period: poetry is no more than a sub-field of discursive practices that are all governed by the rules and techniques of rhetoric. If we are searching then for the ‘added value’ of verse form, its features that mark it out as a special kind of text, it might be better to look at some qualities of rhetoric that would be especially played out in texts in a poetic form. ‘Velocity’ (*γοργότης*), as Lauxtermann’s analysis of meta-literary texts points out,<sup>44</sup> is one of the qualities Byzantine verse especially strived to achieve. Byzantine poetry, by dividing texts into lines that are rhythmically equal, avoiding enjambments, is in fact an extreme application of the rhetorical technique of dividing texts in rhythmical *kola*. In fact, the Byzantines go so far in this view that on many occasions they seem to support the idea that their own poetry is in fact . . . prose. The ambiguity about political verse, which is seen as ‘unmetrical’, is an indication of this. And for Rhakendytes (or Gregorios of Corinth), as we know, even iambs are a form of *εὐρυθμος λογογραφία* (rhythmical prose).<sup>45</sup>

The notions of rhythm and metre are, in eleventh-century discourse, often connected with a special kind of agreeable charm. In a letter for Mauropous (*Ep. Sathas* 182), Psellos asserts that he is mindful of his promise to enhance the reputation of his teacher in conversations with other people. He tries to speak about him as charmingly as possible, ‘adorning the speeches of praise with metrical figures’.<sup>46</sup> We cannot tell whether this refers to poetry or to rhythmical prose; a subsequent reference to Gorgias in fact points to the latter. Again, as in Anon. Sola 1, it is this quality of ‘rhythm’ that is sought after, not the metrical form per se.

Another letter (*Ep. Sathas* 189) describes the various services of eloquence Psellos has performed for his (anonymous) addressee. Psellos boasts that his words, thanks to their excellent technical qualities, did not fail to have effect. Not only was his knowledge of rhetoric effective, but his ‘rhythms’ in particular charmed the ears of everyone. The effect is that his audience relished his words, clapping their hands and dancing. Psellos specifies that harmony may be sought not only in music but also in both prose and poetry.<sup>47</sup> Rhythm

<sup>44</sup> Lauxtermann, ‘Velocity’. <sup>45</sup> Lauxtermann, ‘Velocity’, 21.

<sup>46</sup> Psellos, *Ep. Sathas* 182, p. 464.28–9: *σχήμασι μετρικοῖς τὴν εὐφημίαν κατακοσμών*.

<sup>47</sup> Psellos, *Ep. Sathas* 189, p. 481.29–30: *τὴν γέ τοι ἄρμονίαν μὴ ἐν μέλεισι μόνον ἦγοῦ, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν ἔψει καὶ λόγῳ πεζῷ*.

and harmony in words, as in music, have the power to enchant people. For Psellos, it is the sensory power of rhythm that produces a lasting effect on its hearer. Melodiousness, rhythm, and harmony give his praises more value and add charm and persuasion to words. Psellos emphasizes that this is possible in both prose and poetry. Poetry, I would argue, takes these qualities to a certain perfection by applying them systematically, but it surely does not have a monopoly in them. Rhythm was seen by Byzantines as a rhetorical quality, not a poetical one.

### 2.3. POIËSIS AND POIËTÈS

Is there, then, no clear equivalent for ‘poetry’ in Byzantine parlance? Of course, the words *ποίησις*, *ποιητικόν*, and *ποιητής* do exist. But the Byzantine use of them is remarkable. In the works of Psellos, for instance, the situation is in fact quite simple: apart from the Christian meaning of ‘the Creator’, *ὁ ποιητής* nearly always means ‘Homer’, the ancient poet par excellence. So, for example, when in a polemical writing Psellos uses the quotation *λάϊνον ἔδου χιτῶνα*, he adds: *κατὰ τὸν ποιητήν*, which simply means ‘as Homer says’.<sup>48</sup> It can refer to other poets too, but always to ancient ones. In *Or. min.* 25, for example, Psellos uses the word *ποιητής* repeatedly in reference to Pindar.<sup>49</sup> And when Psellos says in a letter that he will add something ‘poetic’ (*ποιητικόν*) to his words, he in fact means something ‘Homeric’, because he is in this instance likening his admiration for his friend to the chant of Sirens and the lotus eaters.<sup>50</sup> When Byzantines were talking of ‘poetry’, they intended ancient poetry, for them primarily a subject of their education.

Other usages of the term refer to a very abstract notion of ‘the poet’. In an introductory passage in the *Chronographia*, Psellos uses a rhetorical device to state that no one would be able to tell the things he is about to tell. He begins his comparison in this way: ‘Not even a poet with a divinely inspired soul and a tongue transported by the

<sup>48</sup> Michael Psellos, *Orationes forenses et acta*, ed. G. T. Dennis (Stuttgart/Leipzig 1994), 3.83. See for example also Psellos, *Or. min.* 20.12, where Homer is referred to as *ὁ ποιητής*.

<sup>49</sup> Psellos, *Or. min.* 25.167, 179.

<sup>50</sup> Psellos, *Ep. K-D* 17, p. 21, l. 17.

Gods . . . would be able to say anything in proportion to these deeds, he (the poet) staging, as it were, the story and transforming it in manifold ways.<sup>51</sup> Apart from a poet, a rhetor and, surprisingly, a philosopher are mentioned. Undoubtedly, Psellos subtly alludes to his own abilities to write a history no one else can write. But his idea of ‘poet’ is here a theoretical concept. It manifestly echoes the ancient, and especially Platonic, concept of the poet. The context is that of an exaggerated rhetorical turn of speech, and we should not take it as an indication of what Byzantines thought a contemporary poet should or could be.

In Psellos’ essay on Euripides and Pisides, one can note a slight, but significant, difference in the representation of both authors: Euripides is quite consistently called *ὁ ποιητής* (l. 26, 50, 36) and, consequently, his works are referred to as *ποίησις* or *ποίημα* (22, 33, 38, 41, 80, 94, 133). But although Pisides too, for the eleventh-century Byzantine, must have belonged to a distant past, and had the status of a classic, he is only once called *ὁ ποιητής* (l. 101), and is introduced generally as ‘the wise man from Pisidia’.<sup>52</sup> Therefore I would not dismiss as fortuitous the word choice in this sentence:<sup>53</sup>

*Εἰ μὲν οὖν πρὸς τὴν τραγικὴνποίησιν, φημί δὴ Εὐριπίδου, τὰ Πισιδειακὰ μέτρα συγκρίνοισ καὶ τοὺς ῥυθμούς . . .*

*If you now compare the Pisidean metres and rhythms to tragic poetry, I mean that of Euripides . . .*

Euripides’ poetry is qualified as *ποίησις*, while Pisides’ poetry, in the same sentence, is described as *μέτρα* and *ῥυθμοί*. The overtones of *ποίησις* are clear: Euripides belongs to the past of the school, and his works (full of mendacious mythology, one may remember) fall under the heading ‘poetry’. Pisides, by contrast, standing closer to Psellos and his audience, is not a poet, but a ‘wise man’ writing in verse. For the Byzantines, a ‘poet’ was emphatically someone from the past; it is a scholastic term referring to a historical phenomenon.<sup>54</sup> When

<sup>51</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book V, §24: οὗτε γὰρ ἂν ποιητὴς θεόπνοον τὴν ψυχὴν ἔχων καὶ τὴν γλώτταν αὐτὴν θεοφόρητον . . . εἰπεῖν τι μετρίως τῶν τηρικαῦτα πραχθέντων ἰσχύσειαν, ὁ μὲν οἶον σκηνοβατῶν τὴν ἀφήγησιν καὶ ποικίλως μεταμορφούμενος.

<sup>52</sup> Psellos, *Essays* (ed. Dyck), l. 100: ὁ δ’ ἐκ Πισιδίας σοφός.

<sup>53</sup> Psellos, *Essays* (ed. Dyck), l. 133–4.

<sup>54</sup> Konstantinos VII Porphyrogenetos, *De ceremoniis*, ed. J.J. Reiske, *Constantini Porphyrogeniti imperatoris de ceremoniis aulae Byzantinae libri duo* (Bonn 1829), 799 and passim, makes clear that there were professional *ποιηταί*, who were appointed as composers of deme hymns. See also J. Handschin, *Das Zeremonienwerk Kaiser*

Mauropous specifies in a letter that a figure of speech occurs in both poets and prose authors (παρὰ ποιηταῖς τὰ πολλὰ καὶ λογογράφοις),<sup>55</sup> he intends ancient authors, as a subject of study, not contemporary practice.

Thus, the meaning of the word ποιητικός at the beginning of a poem of Mauropous (poem 93) is not just ‘poetic’:

Οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἀτρεκέης οὗτος λόγος  
(ποιητικῶς γὰρ λάζομαι μῦθον πάλιν)

*My words are not true any more,  
for I ‘retract my speech’ in a poetic manner.*

Some explanation is needed here. In poem 92, Mauropous had declared that he would refuse the office of metropolitan. His poem 93 is a recantation of this.<sup>56</sup> Hence, his words (that is, poem 92) ‘are not true any more’. The second verse tells us that he has retracted these words in a ‘poetical’ manner (ποιητικῶς). This does not refer uniquely to the poetic form of poem 93. Instead, it refers to the use of a very well known ancient citation, for the first line is a quote from Stesichorus (οὐκ ἔστ’ ἔτυμος οὗτος λόγος).<sup>57</sup> But the second line itself is also an allusion to the Homeric phrase πάλιν δ’ ὅ γε λάζετο μῦθον.<sup>58</sup> Not only is the recantation itself (in the first verse) a quote from an ancient poet, but so too is Mauropous’ description of this act in the second verse. With ποιητικῶς, Mauropous indicates that he is saying things in the manner of ancient poetry, quoting Stesichorus first, and then alluding to Homer.

To describe his previous poem (poem 92), moreover, Mauropous uses in the first verse the word *logos*, the most general term possible. In other instances, we also see that poems often refer to themselves or other poems as *logos*, a word that can, of course, denote any type of discourse. Examples of this abound. Thus, Mauropous says in poem 55 that he addresses ‘this short *logos*’ (v. 11: τὸν βραχὺν τοῦτον λόγον, i.e. this very poem) to the empress Zoe. In poem 16, Psellos says he

*Konstantins und die sangbare Dichtung* (Basel 1942), 73. This profession may also be intended in Michael Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, ed. P. Gautier, *REB* 39 (1981), 5–143, here 123, l. 1715. I thank Marc Lauxtermann for these references.

<sup>55</sup> Mauropous, *Ep.* 17.29–30.

<sup>56</sup> See below, 145–7.

<sup>57</sup> Transmitted in Plato, *Phaedrus* 243a, and enjoying wide circulation thereafter.

<sup>58</sup> See *Iliad* 4.357 and *Odyssey* 13.254. This allusion, in contrast to the preceding one, was not noticed by the editor.

offers this *logos* as a gift from a servant (v. 15: οἰκέτου δῶρον λόγον); it is reasonable to assume that this poem itself is meant by the word *logos*, and not another text. At the end of poem 1, Psellos says that he has presented the present explanation in a short and clear λόγος (v. 299). In the title of Christophoros' poem 84, and in the poem itself, Christophoros' works are referred to as *συγγράμματα* and *λόγοι* respectively; it is very probable that this refers to Christophoros' poetic works (we do not know anything about any possible prose production by Christophoros). In poem 90 (v. 6), he refers to his own poem using the phrase τῶν παρόντων μου λόγων. In poem 105 the situation is less clear, but I believe that βραχεῖ λόγῳ (v. 7) refers to this very poem, which he here offers to the gardener in exchange for some cucumbers.

Hence, *logos* is a perfectly legitimate term for referring to a poetic text, just as to any other text. If Byzantines wanted to specify more precisely the poetic character of these *logoi*, they simply used the phrase ἔμμετρος λόγος—that is, a *logos* that happens to be in verse form. The word *στίχοι* ('lines') is also sometimes used, notably in the titles of Christophoros' and Mauropous' poetry collections, which are both entitled *στίχοι διάφοροι*. Christophoros uses *στίχοι* in some poems that refer to poem 77 (poems 78.4 and 79.title), but he also uses *ἴαμβοι* once (78.2). Most of Psellos' poems also bear the title *στίχοι* in the manuscripts. Yet *στίχοι* is not an unambiguous term for 'verse lines'. In many letters, it is used to refer to the 'lines' of letters, which are by definition in prose.<sup>59</sup>

At the end of poem 2, in which he explains the meaning of the Song of Songs, Psellos refers to the poem as *politikoi stichoi* (2.1217), one of the few instances (and, to the best of my knowledge, the first) in which a poem in this metre self-identifies as such. As we will see in Chapter 6 (section 6.4), Psellos may have had specific reasons for doing this.

In Psellos' poem 21, a long diatribe against a monk named Sabaites, there is more consideration for the specific poetical character of the text. At the end of this poem (vv. 306–21), the poet repeatedly uses the words *ἴαμβος* (vv. 306, 314) and *ἔμμετρος* (vv. 314, 320), often in combination with *λόγος*, which remains the generic term for referring to the poem. The reason for emphasizing the 'iambic' character of this poem is probably related to its specific content: it

<sup>59</sup> E.g. Mauropous, *Ep.* 9, l. 6; Psellos, *Ep. K-D* 4 (p.4, l. 25) and 264 (p. 309, l. 21).

is an acerbic satire, and satirical features are traditionally (including in Byzantine metrical treatises) linked to the iamb.<sup>60</sup> Mauroπους seems also to have played on the idea by reusing in a polemic the caustic iambic verse that tradition held to have been the first iamb, uttered by a woman called Iambe.<sup>61</sup> The tradition of comedy (the word is mentioned twice towards the end of Psellos' poem) may also have been present in the poets' minds. Play and jest are placed in the foreground: Psellos says that he has made a 'plaything' of Sabbaites in his poem (vv. 313–14: τὸν Σαββαίτην... τοῖς ἐμμέτροις τέθεικα παίγνιον λόγους), and that he has made him an object of mirth in his iambs (v. 317: τοῖς ἰάμβοις τοῖς ἐμοῖς τεθεῖς γέλως).

Jest and satire are also present in the closing verses of Michael Grammatikos' poem against the bishop of Philomelion (poem IV). The bishop, who is speaking at this moment, asks the poet to remember his words; that is, the whole ridiculous story of his life (vv. 91–2):

σὺ δ' αὐτά μοι τήρησον ἐμμέτροις λόγοις  
καὶ τοῖς μεθ' ἡμᾶς εἰς ἀεὶ σῶζε χρόνοις.

*You, preserve these words in your metrical discourse,  
and save them permanently for the times that come after us.*

Very exceptionally, a poet is referring here to future generations reading his poem. But this has little to do with the personal fame of the author: rather, it is another jibe at the bishop, who will now look a fool for eternity. What can be gathered from the two above examples is that verse is seen as an apt medium for satire.<sup>62</sup>

Other meta-poetical statements (if the term can be used) are to be found in the poem by Hesaias which closes Mauroπους' book of collected works (*Vat. gr.* 676). In this book epigram, Hesaias, who calls himself Mauroπους' secretary, praises the works of his employer. One of the qualities most emphasized is the variety of genres found in Mauroπους' collected works: poems, letters, and orations. The book surpasses everything because it excels in this 'threefold variety of *hoi*

<sup>60</sup> G. Agosti, 'Late Antique Iambics and *Iambikè Idea*', in: A. Cavarzere, A. Aloni and A. Barchiesi (eds), *Iambic Ideas: Essays on a Poetic Tradition from Archaic Greece to the Late Roman Empire* (Oxford 2001), 219–55.

<sup>61</sup> Mauroπους 61.5: ἀνθρῶπι', ἀπελθε, τὴν σκάφην ἀνατρέπεις. See below, 274.

<sup>62</sup> See also the conclusions in P. Magdalino, 'Cultural Change? The Context of Byzantine Poetry from Geometres to Prodomos', in: Bernard and Demoen, *Poetry and its Contexts*, 19–36.

*logoi*' (v. 13: τῇ τριτοειδεῖ τῶν λόγων ποικιλίᾳ). Hesaias concludes that Mauroπους is not only a prose author (a *συγγραφεύς*) and a letter writer (an *ἐπιστολεύς*), but also a poet (for which he chooses the term *ἐπικός*). Because of this versatility, Mauroπους surpasses even Demosthenes, who never wrote anything poetic. Even one of these genres (called *σκέλος*, v. 25) would have brought fame, but now that he can unite three, Mauroπους 'carries off the winning prize among all men who bring offerings to *hoi logoi*' (v. 28). This last phrase indicates that Mauroπους, whether writing poetry or prose, is considered as working in the 'field' of *hoi logoi*. His works place him in relation to all *logioi*, not to poets alone. One cannot escape the impression that, in Hesaias' poem, Mauroπους is praised for his poetic works simply because he was able to master this different form, not for any intrinsic quality that could be called 'poetic' and would place him in relation to other poets. It is a token of his *ποικιλία*, his versatility, a quality very much praised in the intellectual elite of the eleventh century.

Likewise, in poem 1, which introduces his collected works, Mauroπους talks about his *logoi*, which he offers to 'the friends of *hoi logoi*', in one of those typical phrases that combine several meanings of the word. He specifies in passing that his works comprise both poetry and prose (1.27 *ἔμμετρων, οὐκ ἔμμετρων*). As Lauxtermann stresses, this taxonomy is only a superficial one, and does not entail a literary distinction.<sup>63</sup>

In Psellos' poem 18, poetry also plays a role as one of the subdivisions of *logoi*. In this encomium to Isaakios Komnenos, Psellos states at the end that the emperor has many people at his disposal who will sing his praises. There are people who have 'grown up with *hoi logoi* in the way of the Muses and who will give rhythm to everything in rhythmical metres'.<sup>64</sup> This, for once, implies that poetry, and, it seems, only poetry, will be used for a certain purpose, apparently for its 'rhythmical' qualities. But at the very end of the poem, it appears that it is not only poetry that will be at Isaakios' disposal. Every tongue will sing his praises, 'embellishing them with metres and prose at the same time'.<sup>65</sup> The alternation of prose and poetry is an indicator of variety, which heightens the value of the praises in honour

<sup>63</sup> Lauxtermann, 'Velocity', 22.

<sup>64</sup> Psellos 18.51–2: οἱ τοῖς λόγοις δὲ μουσικῶς τετραμμένοι//καὶ πάντα ῥυθμίζοντες εὐρύθμοις μέτροις.

<sup>65</sup> Psellos 18.57–8: καὶ πάσα γλῶσσα σοὺς ἀνυμνήσει πόνους//μέτροις τε ποικίλλουσα καὶ λόγοις ἅμα.

of Isaakios. Poetry is included only because it is a different form. The verb *ποικίλλω* is telling; what is aimed at here is the stylistic principle of *ποικιλία*, the quality for which Mauropous was praised by Hesaias.

#### 2.4. POETRY AND LITERARY TRADITION

There is only one Byzantine source that mentions our poets in their capacity as poets. This is a poem that is in many respects a remarkable text.<sup>66</sup> It has come down to us in one manuscript under the name of Michael Psellos, and is edited as pseudo-Psellian poem 68, together with another similar poem. However, given that the fragment under consideration here mentions both Psellos and Theophylaktos of Ochrid as already deceased, it must have been written in a later period. In this text, therefore, we are looking from a twelfth-century viewpoint, a period when the status and position of authors were arguably no longer the same.

The poem is an answer to a previous poem written by a certain Ioannes (see v. 76), whose poem was allegedly full of grammatical and prosodical errors. Our poet, a monk, states, with a touch of sarcasm, that he has read many poems in different metres, but that he has never encountered anything like the poetry of Ioannes. Homer, Hesiod, some lyric poets, Euripides, and the Three Hierarchs are all mentioned, along with some unexpected names such as Themistokles and Chrysippus. None of them, he jokes, can come near to Ioannes. Then some more recent poets pass under review (vv. 81–5):

σὺ δ' αὖ, ὑπέρτιμε Ψελλέ, Πισίδη, Χριστοφόρε,  
 Λέων καὶ Θεοφύλακτε πρόεδρε Βουλγαρίας,  
 δεινὴν καὶ πάνυ χαλεπὴν ὑπέστητε ζημίαν  
 προμεταστάντες ὑπὸ γῆν καὶ μὴ μεμαθηκότες  
 τοὺς στίχους οὓς μοι πέπομφεν μόνος ὁ στιχοπλόκος. 85

*And you, hypertimos Psellos, Pisides, Christophoros,  
 Leon and Theophylaktos, bishop of Bulgaria,*

<sup>66</sup> See W. Hörandner and A. Paul, 'Zu Ps.-Psellos, Gedichte 67 (*Ad monachum superbum*) und 68 (*Ad eundem*)', *Medioevo greco* 11 (2011), 107–38; K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur von Justinian bis zum Ende des Oströmischen Reiches* (Munich 1897), 440–1.



*you have suffered a terrible and hard loss,  
by going under the sod prematurely, without having read  
the verses that this single versifier has sent to me.*

85

Leon refers most probably to Leon Choirosphaktes, the late tenth-century poet of the *Χιλιόστιχος Θεολογία*.<sup>67</sup> In this passage, some specifically Byzantine and even recent poets are grouped together as examples of good poets, which is quite rare. It is the only mention of Christophoros Mitylenaios in another Byzantine literary source, and it is the only mention of Psellos as a poet.<sup>68</sup>

This list of poets and metres is introduced in the following way: ‘I have read many verses of rhetors’ (v. 49: ἐγὼ πολλοὺς ἀνέγνωκα στίχους ἀνδρῶν ῥητόρων). Apparently our poet takes it for granted that verses are written by ‘rhetors’, indicating that besides oratory proper, poetry was also a task of rhetors. Again, it is simply the prosodical formal features of poetry that make the difference. Precisely because the opponent’s treatment of technical prosodical matters was so bad, our poet mentions authors who were set examples for correct versification. Consequently, even in this text, Christophoros and Psellos are not presented as ‘poets’: they are here praised for their abilities in technical versification.

If poetry is something that did not command the attention of contemporaries, it is hardly a surprise that Byzantines did not go to great lengths to preserve a poetic tradition. To show how erratic the Byzantines’ transmission of their own poetry can be, let us take the example of Christophoros. His collection survives in a manuscript preserved in the Grottaferrata monastery (the *Cryptensis*). According to Canart, this manuscript was written in the thirteenth century, in the Terra d’Otranto.<sup>69</sup> This geographical origin is important to understand the *Nachleben* of Christophoros’ poetry. His verses, both from his *στίχοι διάφοροι* and from his calendars, are imitated, paraphrased, and copied by the poets of Otranto of the thirteenth century, such as Nikolaos-Nektarios of Casole, often in the same

<sup>67</sup> For other suggestions, see Hörandner and Paul, ‘Zu Ps-Psellos’, 123.

<sup>68</sup> He is mentioned as an exemplary letter-writer in the *Synopsis rhetorike* of Joseph Rhakendytes, see C. Walz (ed.), *Rhetores Graeci*, 9 vols. (Stuttgart 1832–6), III, 526. For the Byzantine reception of Psellos, see Papaioannou, *Rhetoric and Authorship*, 250–67.

<sup>69</sup> P. Canart, ‘Le livre grec en Italie méridionale sous les règnes normand et souabe: aspects matériels et sociaux’, *Scrittura e civiltà* 2 (1978), 103–62.

manuscripts.<sup>70</sup> Christophoros' calendars in particular were remarkably successful in this milieu, and may have been the principal reason why he was taken as an example to be copied. The oldest manuscript with his calendar in canones, *Escor. gr.* X IV 8 (twelfth century) is surely of southern Italian origin.<sup>71</sup> *Vat. gr.* 1276 (fourteenth century), also from southern Italy, contains some of Christophoros' *στίχοι διάφοροι*, but also his iambic calendar, which in this manuscript served as a direct model for the Otranto poets, who were responsible for the production of the manuscript.<sup>72</sup> The same applies to the *Cryptensis*, which contains, apart from Christophoros' 'various verses', also some poetry by Nikolaos-Nektarios and Georgios Bardanes, two contemporary Otranto poets. These were the people who were 'working on' Christophoros, copying him, and at the same time imitating him, especially his calendars. Whether the success of his calendars is due to a desire of the anti-Latin monastic communities in southern Italy to provide an alternative to the existing Western calendars is impossible to ascertain, but the popularity of Christophoros in this region is undeniable.

Without the *Cryptensis*, we would in fact possess only a very partial image of the work of this poet. Only one other manuscript, *Vat. gr.* 1357, offers a series of Christophorea correctly attributed (this applies to twenty-four poems; four others are anonymous). Nearly all other manuscripts hopelessly mix things up. *Marc. gr.* 524 transmits forty-two poems of Christophoros, all without ascription.<sup>73</sup> *Hauniensis* 1899 offers five poems, only one correctly ascribed to Christophoros, two others to Nikolaos of Kerkyra, and two others without a clear ascription. *Laur. conv. soppr.* 627 has another five, either ascribed to Theodoros Prodromos or anonymous. *Vat. Ottobon. gr.* 324 also has some poems transmitted anonymously, mixed with poems of Theophylaktos of Ochrid. Other ascriptions are to Psellos (poem no. 87 in *Vindob. theol. gr.* 242), Nikolaos Hydrountinos (31 in *Vat.*

<sup>70</sup> See M. Gigante, *Poeti bizantini di Terra d'Otranto nel secolo XIII* (Naples 1985), e.g. poem 10 of 'Nikolaos' and poem 2 of 'Nektarios'. See J. Hoeck and R. Loenertz, *Nikolaos-Nektarios von Otranto, Abt von Casole* (Ettal 1965), for the identity of these two poets.

<sup>71</sup> E. Follieri, *I calendari in metro innografico di Cristoforo Mitileneo* (Brussels 1980), I, 19–20.

<sup>72</sup> P. Acconcia Longo and A. Jacob, 'Une anthologie salentine du XIVe siècle: le Vaticanus gr. 1276', *RSBN* 19 (1982), 149–228.

<sup>73</sup> See also Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 71.

gr. 1276), Manuel Philes (85 in *Laur.* 59.17), Prodrornos again (several isolated poems), etc.<sup>74</sup> So, were it not for the enormous success of his calendars, which partly contributed to a rather curious *Nachleben* in a limited geographic region, but one favourable to the survival of a single manuscript (in spite of some edacious mice), the *στίχοι διάφοροι* attributed to Christophoros would have been limited to a few scattered poems, and we would have known next to nothing of the secular poems of this remarkable poet. Christophoros Mytilenaios would have been a very shadowy figure in our histories of Byzantine literature.

In Byzantine anthologies, attributions to authors are very sloppy, to say the least. It is significant in this respect that the ‘poets’ occasionally mentioned in the contemporary sources are not the poets whose texts are still extant. This shows us two things: first, that we possess only a tiny fraction of the poetry produced in Byzantium; second, that the authors who claim precedence in our histories of Byzantine literature were not the ones who captured, as poets, the attention of their contemporaries. It is a fallacy of modern scholars to suppose that texts were ‘public’ and accessible to everyone from the moment that they were written.<sup>75</sup> They did not enter Byzantine literary history from the moment they were produced; far from it.

Returning to the questions raised in the beginning of this chapter, I think it can be concluded that there is no such thing as *littérarité* in Byzantium, at least not in this period, and even less such a thing as ‘poeticity’. The men we call ‘poets’ did not call themselves or each other so. There is no consciousness of a distinct artistic occupation of ‘poet’, and there is no articulated cultural and social space where poets qua poets compete with each other. Instead, the term *hoi logoi* is used to refer to a wide range of intellectual activities, as well as to a distinct social space that is culturally defined. Poetry is only seldom singled out as a part of this. Byzantines only rarely divided the domain of *logoi* into prose and poetry, and even where they did the difference between the two is merely a question of form, with no further reaching consequences. Someone who is a ‘friend of *hoi logoi*’,

<sup>74</sup> For a complete overview, see Kurtz, *Die Gedichte*, x–xv.

<sup>75</sup> See P. Odorico, ‘L’auteur byzantin. Taxinomie et systématique: un essai de définition’, in: P. Odorico and P. Agapitos (eds), *Pour une «nouvelle» histoire de la littérature byzantine. Actes du colloque international philologique, Nicosie, 25–28 mai 2000* (Paris 2002), 61–80, here 76–80.

or a *logios*, would be expected to study books, excerpt knowledge from them, transmit this knowledge (whether as an official teacher or not) in an attractive form, and at the same time to provide the appropriate words, metrical or not, for various occasions, public and private. Moreover, to put it sharply, Byzantine poetry was generally not written for posterity. Poets did not consciously write within a tradition of poetry. Poems were in the first place written for one-time occasions.<sup>76</sup>

Based upon these observations, I will often use the term ‘intellectuals’ throughout this study, as I believe that this neutral term captures better the social and cultural role and the self-definition of those persons we call ‘poets’. For the same reason, I will refrain as much as possible from the term ‘literature’ and its cognates; and by ‘poetry’, it is understood that I will mean any text in verse form. Even the word ‘text’ is not without its problems, as we tend to mean by this written instances of discursive practices, while many ‘texts’ may well have been used primarily in oral performance. The term ‘discursive practices’ instead will sometimes be used to denote the productive aspect of *hoi logoi*: composition of written texts, performance or improvisation of texts, copying and compiling of texts, and so on. I cannot be entirely consistent in this, for that would run the risk of imposing an arcane vocabulary on the reader. As I hope that this chapter may have made clear, the conceptual framework in which Byzantines wrote and read ‘texts’ is different from ours, and changing our terminology is only one step (and an insufficient one at that) towards placing ourselves within this framework.

<sup>76</sup> Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 61.



## Readings

On one of the first pages of *Vat. gr. 676*, the manuscript that contains Maupous' collected works, the reader finds the following epigram 'on the book' (εἰς τὴν βίβλον):

*Τίς ἄν σε προσβλέψει, φιλάττη βίβλε;  
 Τίς ἐντύχοι σοι; τίς δ' ἄν εἰς χεῖρας λάβοι;  
 Οὕτως ἔχει φόβος με τῆς ἀχρησίας,  
 Κἄν τι προσεῖη χρήσιμον τοῖς σοῖς λόγοις<sup>1</sup>*

*My dear book, who will look at you?  
 Who will read you? Who will take you in their hands?  
 So much does the fear grip me that you may not be used,  
 even if something useful may be present in your words.*

Maupous expresses here the fear that his works will remain unread. In the eyes of the poet, this amounts to the same thing as the non-existence of his works: all that may be present (v. 4: *προσεῖη*) in the text itself, however useful, will be written for nothing if it is not read. It is only by being read that a text can acquire meaning. The poem assumes that every time the texts will be read, they can again be of use. The idea that a literary work comes to life in the act of reading is essential for reader-response criticism. Iser argued that a text can only acquire signification as a result of an interpretative operation on the part of the reader.<sup>2</sup> The text does not remain passive in this act of reading: every text governs in a way the readings that are applied to it, by pushing the reader into a reader role. This reader role is implicit: even if the text proclaims explicitly which reader it addresses, this is often not the reader the author (even unconsciously) has in mind

<sup>1</sup> de Lagarde, p. vi (poem II).

<sup>2</sup> W. Iser, *Der Akt des Lesens* (Munich 1994).

when writing the text. This gap between ‘explicit’ and ‘implied’ reader (for the former, the terms ‘fictive’ or ‘inscribed’ are also sometimes found)<sup>3</sup> will underlie the kind of problems posed in this chapter.

We can also infer that Mauropous expected that his works might be read and reread in the future (although he has his doubts). However, one of the more conspicuous features of many poems of this period is that they seem to be intended for a unique occasion, after which they were destined to oblivion. This tension between the apparent ephemeral nature of this poetry, which we also observed in the previous chapter, and the desire, here expressly voiced, to preserve it on paper for future readers will recur as a constant theme here.

Byzantine scholars have been paying more and more attention to the reader’s side of Byzantine texts, although there remain many gaps in this area. The work of Guglielmo Cavallo and his attention to ‘reading practices’ (‘pratiche di lettura’) has been very important in this regard.<sup>4</sup> Cavallo’s approach follows the trail of ‘historians of reading’ such as Roger Chartier, who stressed the impact of the medium of the text on the interpretative strategies that its readers will employ: ‘When the “same” text is apprehended through very different mechanisms of representation, it is no longer the same.’<sup>5</sup> Chartier therefore calls for an understanding of the historical forms of representation. In Western medieval philology, this has resulted in attention to manuscripts as important witnesses to reading culture. This kind of focus is now beginning to influence Byzantine studies.<sup>6</sup> In the case of poems, scholars have begun to pay attention to the different significances a text could acquire depending on the context in which the Byzantine reader came across it.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See W. D. Wilson, ‘Readers in Texts’, *PMLA* 96.5 (1981), 848–63.

<sup>4</sup> See now G. Cavallo, *Lire à Byzance* (Paris 2006).

<sup>5</sup> R. Chartier, *Forms and Meanings. Texts, Performances, and Audiences from Codex to Computer* (Philadelphia 1995), 2.

<sup>6</sup> C. Holmes, ‘Written Culture in Byzantium and Beyond: Contents, Contexts and Interpretations’, in: C. Holmes and J. Waring (eds), *Literacy, Education and Manuscript Transmission in Byzantium and Beyond* (Leiden/Boston/Cologne 2002), 1–13. For a fruitful application of this approach, see D. Bianconi, *Tessalonica nell’età dei Paleologi: le pratiche intellettuali nel riflesso della cultura scritta* (Paris 2005).

<sup>7</sup> W. Hörandner, ‘Zur kommunikativen Funktion byzantinischer Gedichte’, in: *Acts, XVIIIth International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Selected Papers* (Shepherdstown 1996), IV, 104–18; and M. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres. Texts and Contexts. Vol. 1* (Vienna 2003).

We are now also better informed about the Byzantine readers. The reading public in Byzantium was fairly large, compared with its Western counterparts.<sup>8</sup> Of course, books were rare and expensive,<sup>9</sup> but instead of seeing this as an impediment to reading, scholars have pointed out processes such as lending, collective reading, performance, etc.<sup>10</sup> As a result, the focus has shifted from a purely quantitative view towards the analysis of reading levels and reading groups.<sup>11</sup> Inevitably, the level of literacy that someone attained stood in relationship to his position in society, but this relationship is sometimes more complex than it seems at first sight, and may shift in time.<sup>12</sup> It is also vital to remember that outside the world of the urban intelligentsia, there was a class of people able to read, and it is in these milieux that some literary genres found a fertile ground.<sup>13</sup>

This chapter aims to reveal more of the concrete circumstances in which poetry was presented to its readers in the eleventh century. I also attempt to come a step closer to an understanding of the expectations of Byzantine readers regarding their own poetry: did they approach poems as pragmatic texts serving a single occasion, or did they also employ reading strategies on a more independent literary level? What is, in other words, the relationship between the real-life context and the context of the word written on paper? In approaching these questions, I will pay attention to the social dimensions of reading: what role does reading play within the dynamics of friendship and rivalry? Generally speaking, we will be dealing with two distinct kinds of evidence. The first consists of the tangible remains—that is, inscriptions and manuscripts—which constitute direct evidence of representations of texts from the Byzantine period. Second, there is indirect evidence: texts in which Byzantine authors themselves registered, or responded to, readings of their poems.

<sup>8</sup> R. Browning, 'Literacy in the Byzantine World', *BMGS* 4 (1978), 39–54.

<sup>9</sup> N. Wilson, 'Books and Readers in Byzantium', in: *Byzantine Books and Bookmen. A Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium* (Washington DC 1975), 1–15.

<sup>10</sup> See M. Mullett, 'Writing in Early Medieval Byzantium', in: R. McKitterick (ed.), *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge 1990), 156–85, esp. 156–61.

<sup>11</sup> See Cavallo, *Lire*, 35–46.

<sup>12</sup> E. Patlagean, 'Discours écrit, discours parlé. Niveaux de culture à Byzance aux VIIIe-XIe siècles (note critique)', *Annales ESC* 34 (1979), 264–78.

<sup>13</sup> C. Roueché, 'Byzantine Writers and Readers: Storytelling in the Eleventh Century', in: R. Beaton (ed.), *The Greek Novel, A.D. 1–1985* (London 1987), 123–33.



## 3.1. READING POETRY: THE TANGIBLE REMAINS

## 3.1.1. Poetry in public spaces

It would not be an exaggeration to state that, in eleventh-century Byzantium, people encountered poetry quite frequently. To start with, they could observe it in its imposing epigraphic form when looking at the many religious and secular buildings of the capital. One could still admire, for instance, the impressive inscription carved around the entire church of St Polyeuktos in the sixth century at the behest of Anicia Juliana; a note in the *Anthologia Palatina* (compiled in the late ninth century) reports that the epigram was still readable; we have no reason to assume that it fell in disrepair in the eleventh century.<sup>14</sup> In Hagia Sophia, more inscriptions from different dates could be read; probably the most recent was that of emperor Romanos III Argyropoulos, who had restored the apse, commemorating this expense with an inscription.<sup>15</sup> This epigraphic activity did not remain confined to Constantinople. In Athens, an official named Kalomalos left a dedicatory inscription on the church of the Saints Theodore.<sup>16</sup> In Bari, the local potentate Basileios Mesardonites had a wall of the church for St Nicolas inscribed with a lengthy poem.<sup>17</sup> Apart from buildings, many smaller objects of art also displayed epigrams; some of them can be dated more precisely because emperors often commissioned them, leaving their name in the epigram.<sup>18</sup> It is probable that these objects (icons, reliquaries, and the like) were deliberately put on display, in a visible place in the church or monastery to which they were donated. From the collection of all surviving Byzantine inscriptions made by the Viennese team, it can be deduced that the number of surviving eleventh-century

<sup>14</sup> C. Mango and I. Ševčenko, 'Remains of the Church of St. Polyeuktos at Constantinople', *DOP* 15 (1961), 243–7, here 246; C. L. Connor, 'The Epigram in the Church of Hagios Polyeuktos in Constantinople and Its Byzantine Response', *Byz* 69 (1999), 479–527.

<sup>15</sup> S. G. Mercati, 'Sulle iscrizioni di Santa Sofia', in: *Collectanea Byzantina*, II, 276–95, text: 293.

<sup>16</sup> V. Laurent, 'Nicolas Kalomalos et l'église des saints Théodore à Athènes', *Ελληνικά* 7 (1934), 72–82.

<sup>17</sup> A. Guillou, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques médiévales d'Italie* (Rome 1996), 155.

<sup>18</sup> For eleventh-century historical persons present in inscriptions, see A. Paul, 'Historical Figures Appearing in Epigrams on Objects', in: F. Bernard and K. Demoen (eds), *Poetry and its Contexts in Eleventh-century Byzantium* (Farnham/Burlington 2012), 89–112.

inscriptions approaches, but probably does not exceed, one hundred.<sup>19</sup> Poetry also turned up on everyday objects. Many personal seals of high officials bear metrical inscriptions, often standard formulae.<sup>20</sup> On coins too, metrical inscriptions can be found, although more rarely. A *miliaresion* of Romanos III has a hexameter,<sup>21</sup> while on the *miliaresia* of Monomachos the dodecasyllable *Δέσποινα σώζοις εὐσεβῆ Μονομάχον* can be read.<sup>22</sup> *Miliaresia* inscribed with this verse are known to have reached as far away as Sweden.

The quantity of inscriptions was, of course, once far greater. Many epigraphic remains have been lost or destroyed in past centuries. Therefore there are very few ‘matches’: that is, epigrams still to be found *in situ* that are also transmitted in the normal manuscript tradition.<sup>23</sup> In fact, to the best of my knowledge, there is no eleventh-century epigram that can be classified as such, at least not if we require that both be contemporaneous. The inscriptions that were made using Christophoros’ calendar verses all date from later centuries.<sup>24</sup> This great degree of destruction notwithstanding, one could infer that both in interior spaces and on the street, and both in the capital and in the province, poetry was visibly present.

Recent studies have paid attention to the ways in which the spatial context of inscriptions influenced the readings of those inscriptions, both on buildings and on portable objects of art.<sup>25</sup> In the examples investigated by Amy Papalexandrou, the presence of the inscription

<sup>19</sup> A. Rhoby (ed.), *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Fresken und Mosaiken*, Byzantinische Epigramme in inschriftlicher Überlieferung 1 (Vienna 2009); and A. Rhoby (ed.), *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Ikonen und Objekten der Kleinkunst*, Byzantinische Epigramme in inschriftlicher Überlieferung 2 (Vienna 2010).

<sup>20</sup> For an overview of these seals with metrical inscriptions, see now A.-K. Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus der byzantinischen Siegel mit metrischen Legenden*. vol. 1 (Vienna 2011); metrical seal inscriptions start to appear in great numbers from the eleventh century, see Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus*, 33–5.

<sup>21</sup> P. Grierson, *Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection*. Vol. III.2. (Washington 1973), 712–14. See also F. Lauritzen, ‘The Miliaresion Poet: The Dactylic Inscription on a Coin of Romanos III Argyros’, *Byz* 79 (2009), 231–40.

<sup>22</sup> Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, vol. III.2., 736–7.

<sup>23</sup> Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 32.

<sup>24</sup> A. Rhoby, ‘On the Inscriptional Versions of the Epigrams of Christophoros Mitylenaios’, in: Bernard and Demoen (eds), *Poetry and its Contexts*, 147–54.

<sup>25</sup> A. Papalexandrou, ‘Text in Context: Eloquent Monuments and the Byzantine Beholder’, *Word and Image* 17.3 (2001), 259–83; Connor, ‘The Epigram in the Church of Hagios Polyeyktos’; B. Pentcheva, ‘Räumliche und akustische Präsenz in byzantinischen Epigrammen: Der Fall der Limburger Staurothek’, in: W. Hörandner and

on church walls enhances the purpose of the epigrams to ‘make buildings speak’; an example analysed by Bissera Pentcheva shows how the rectangular form of the writing space re-enacts a ceremonial procession. Readers were sometimes forced to engage physically with objects by turning them around or walking around them in order to read the epigrams.<sup>26</sup> The interaction of the inscription with its object is of both a textual and a physical nature; and the poem very often playfully refers to this physical aspect. All these studies stress that reading aloud is the only way in which the message of the epigram realizes its full potential.<sup>27</sup> Reading those inscriptions was thus very much a performative action engaging actively with the materiality of the inscribed object. Visual and acoustic aspects not only enriched the readings, but in fact also contributed to the meaning of the text.

### 3.1.2. Poetry in manuscripts

Compared to the extent of loss and destruction of inscriptions on buildings and objects, books were a much more favourable environment for the preservation of poetry. Two types of poetic texts transmitted by books can be distinguished. The first type is comparable to inscriptions on objects or buildings: they present and clarify the purpose of the inscribed object, in this case a book. Lauxtermann called these poems ‘book epigrams’, that is, ‘epigrams closely related to the production of the book’.<sup>28</sup> These book epigrams are to be found predominantly on the ‘fringes’ of the book: first or last page, frontispiece, margin, etc. They are paratexts: they are not part of the main text, but present the main text and guide the reader in his reading experience. They are also physically to be found on the threshold between the materiality of the manuscript and the immateriality of its content.<sup>29</sup> Book epigrams, in this sense, are as much texts *on* books as texts *in* books. About one-tenth of all eleventh-century manuscripts contain one or more book epigrams.<sup>30</sup> They are an extremely valuable

A. Rhoby (eds), *Die kulturhistorische Bedeutung byzantinischer Epigramme. Akten des internationalen Workshop (Wien, 1.-2. Dezember 2006)* (Vienna 2008), 75–84.

<sup>26</sup> A.-M. Talbot, ‘Epigrams in Context: Metrical Inscriptions on Art and Architecture of the Palaiologan Era’, *DOP* 53 (1999), 75–90.

<sup>27</sup> See also Cavallo, *Lire*, 54–5.

<sup>28</sup> Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 30.

<sup>29</sup> For the concept of ‘paratexts’, see G. Genette, *Seuils* (Paris 1987).

<sup>30</sup> This calculation is made on the basis of a pilot database of book epigrams compiled by Klaas Bentein at Ghent University.

source on reading and writing practices, manuscript circulation, art history, etc.

In contrast, many poetic texts are transmitted in an indirect way; that is, poems were collected or anthologized by the scribes or compilers of a manuscript. We may distinguish three groups according to the chronological relation of books to their content: first, eleventh-century books containing earlier poetry, which may give us clues about the general approach of eleventh-century Byzantines towards the phenomenon of 'poetry'; second, eleventh-century manuscripts containing eleventh-century poetry, of which the interest in studying them is obvious; and third, later Byzantine manuscripts containing eleventh-century poetry, which may tell us something about Byzantine (albeit not contemporary) reading attitudes towards our poetry. We may be reminded here that the lion's share of Byzantine book production consisted of manuscripts directly relevant to the experience of Christian faith: Bibles, theological exegeses, saints' lives, liturgical manuscripts (such as lectionaries, *menaia*, etc.).

A precious indication of the quantity of poetry manuscripts circulating in eleventh-century Byzantium is the will of Eustathios Boilas, a wealthy landowner from Asia Minor.<sup>31</sup> Among the seventy-five or so books mentioned in his will, written around 1052, we find only two manuscripts containing poetry: one containing inter alia the poems of Gregory of Nazianzos (l. 152: τοῦ Θεολόγου τὰ ἔπη), and one containing works by Pisides (l. 161). Of course, a far greater quantity of hymnographic texts would have been found in the various *heirmologia*, *sticheraria*, *triodia*, and *menaia* mentioned in the will.

The corpus of extant manuscripts from the period, which is fairly large, may also offer indications about the diffusion and character of 'poetic' manuscripts. A comprehensive survey of all eleventh-century manuscripts containing poetry is beyond my scope here: not only is a precise dating often impossible, but it is also a subject on which not much work has been done (at least not with an interest in the Byzantine side of manuscript copying). So I can only give a partial impression.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> See P. Lemerle, *Cinq études sur le XIe siècle byzantin* (Paris 1977), 13–63 (text: 20–9). I cite from this edition by line number.

<sup>32</sup> Research presented in this section greatly benefited from the Pinakes database of manuscripts: Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes, *Pinakes. Textes et manuscrits grecs*, <<http://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr>>, last accessed 26/04/2012.

Homer is represented by numerous manuscripts: *Lond. Brit. Mus. Burney* 86 (the so-called ‘Townleianus’), *Marc. gr.* 453 (the Venetus B), *Laur.* 32.3, *Escor. gr.* Y. I. 1 and Ω. I. 12 all contain the *Iliad*, mostly supplemented with scholia.<sup>33</sup> *Laur.* 32.24 has the *Odyssey*. The scholia that are usually attached to the Homeric text provide a running commentary with mainly grammatical, lexical, and mythological knowledge. A school context appears the most evident milieu in which these manuscripts were produced. The *Iliad* was of course a mandatory subject in Byzantine education. The most likely user of these manuscripts is a grammarian, using the texts and their comments to instruct his pupils on mythology, grammar, versification, and the like.<sup>34</sup> But this is a hypothesis that would need to be tested by studying the manuscripts in more detail.

Tragedy is present to a lesser degree: we have, for instance, *Jerusalem Taphou* 36, a palimpsest from around 1000 with fragments of Euripides,<sup>35</sup> but not much more, as it seems. *Marc. gr.* 474, an important Aristophanes codex, has recently been re-dated to the eleventh century.<sup>36</sup> Hellenistic poetry is to be found in *Vat. Pal. gr.* 168 (with Apollonios Rhodios) and *Marc. gr.* 476 (with Aratos and Lycophron’s *Alexandra*).<sup>37</sup>

The poems of Gregory of Nazianzos are transmitted in several manuscripts of the period (for instance, *Laur.* 7.10 and *Paris. gr.* 990).<sup>38</sup> Another poet widely copied is Theodoros Stoudites.<sup>39</sup> One of the most complete collections of his poems is *Marc. gr.* 141, from the eleventh century; four other manuscripts used in Speck’s edition also date to our century. Some areas of poetry are notably absent, such as Hesiod and Pindar (not to mention other archaic poets);<sup>40</sup> neither do

<sup>33</sup> See H. Erbse, *Scholia graeca in Homeri iliadem* (Berlin 1969), xviii–xxxviii.

<sup>34</sup> On copying ancient poetry for school purposes: H. Hunger, *Schreiben und Lesen in Byzanz. Die byzantinische Buchkultur* (Munich 1989), 74.

<sup>35</sup> A. Turyn, *The Byzantine Manuscript Tradition of the Tragedies of Euripides* (Urbana, Ill. 1957), 86–7.

<sup>36</sup> N. Wilson, *Aristophanea: Studies on the Text of Aristophanes* (Oxford 2007), 6.

<sup>37</sup> H. Hunger et al., *Geschichte der Textüberlieferung der antiken und mittelalterlichen Literatur. Band I: Antikes und mittelalterliches Buch- und Schriftwesen. Überlieferungsgeschichte der antiken Literatur* (Zürich 1961), 250–1.

<sup>38</sup> See C. Simelidis, *Selected Poems of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Göttingen 2009), 101, for an overview of the manuscripts used for this edition.

<sup>39</sup> For an overview of manuscripts, see P. Speck (ed.), *Theodoros Stoudites, Jamben auf verschiedene Gegenstände* (Berlin 1968), 7–24.

<sup>40</sup> Hunger et al., *Überlieferungsgeschichte*, 280–1.

we have, as far as I can see, any extant eleventh-century manuscript containing works of Pisides, although he was surely widely read.<sup>41</sup>

We may come to the conclusion that manuscripts with an exclusively or predominantly poetic content made up only a very small part of eleventh-century manuscript production. Not surprisingly, those poets with whom our poets show much affinity (especially Gregory of Nazianzos and Theodoros Stoudites) circulate widely, as do the canonical school texts such as Homer. The fervent copying of manuscripts for philological reasons, as happened in earlier and later centuries, is largely absent. It is notable, for instance, that the completion of the *Anthologia Palatina*, which took place in the tenth century,<sup>42</sup> or the compilation of the *Anthologia Barberina* (c.920)<sup>43</sup> have left very few traces, and have not inspired similar initiatives, in the eleventh century. For the next *syllogae minores* of ancient epigrams, we have to wait for the thirteenth century.<sup>44</sup> Interest in an enterprise of collecting ancient poetry seems to have disappeared completely.

Only a few manuscripts from the eleventh century itself contain contemporary poetry (apart from book epigrams, of course). The most important, *Vat. gr.* 676, is obviously one of a kind: it is the presentation copy of the works of Mauropous. We will deal with it in detail in the next chapter. The poem quoted at the beginning of the present chapter may serve as a sufficient indication that this collection was intended to be read as a highly personal literary achievement.

Apart from this unique manuscript, we seem to have only isolated and inconsistent efforts in the eleventh century to include contemporary poetry. When we look at *Vat. gr.* 753, which contains the poems of Anon. Sola, we get only a fragmentary picture.<sup>45</sup> The

<sup>41</sup> See also C. De Stefani, 'A Few Thoughts on the Influence of Classical and Byzantine Poetry on the Profane Poems of Ioannes Mauropous', in: Bernard and Demoen (eds), *Poetry and its Contexts*, 155–79, here 166–8.

<sup>42</sup> A. Cameron, *The Greek Anthology from Meleager to Planudes* (Oxford 1993), 108–16.

<sup>43</sup> Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 123–8.

<sup>44</sup> F. Maltomini, *Tradizione antologica dell'epigramma greco: le sillogi minori di età bizantina e umanistica* (Rome 2008).

<sup>45</sup> Dated to the eleventh century in Sola, 'Giambografi sconosciuti', 17; similarly in Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 327; but to the twelfth century, and, with some reservations, to an Italian original, by J. Leroy, 'Les manuscrits grecs d'Italie', in: A. Gruys and J. P. Gumbert (eds), *Codicologica 2. Éléments pour une codicologie comparée* (Leiden 1978), 52–71, here 58.

manuscript is a psalter, preceded by exegetical catena on the psalms. Before that, there are a number of miscellaneous verses: the poems edited by Sola and the famous verses inscribed on the heads of the Theodoroi Graptoi. The manuscript has a very disparate appearance: it consists of several cahiers bound together.<sup>46</sup> The poetic section, copied in another hand, may have existed initially as a separate booklet, consisting of some miscellaneous poems, later added to the main manuscript with the psalter. Here we probably catch a glimpse of the initial stage of circulation of poetry: poetry copied down in small cahiers or booklets, which only later were integrated into a real 'book'.

Another manuscript that includes contemporary verses is *Bodl. Clarke* 15, a psalter finished in 1078.<sup>47</sup> This book comprises some elaborate book epigrams written down by the book's owner, Markos the Monk. These poems, executed in a splendid manner, indicate, in the opinion of Marc Lauxtermann, that the manuscript was used for private devotional ends.<sup>48</sup> Directly before the text of the psalms, Markos also included a fragment from Psellos' poem on the titles of the psalms (poem 1). The fragment is taken from the last section of the poem (vv. 262–91), explaining the meaning of the term *diapsalma*. The manuscript does not identify the author of these verses. Consequently, they are indicated as anonymous by the catalogues, and the manuscript was not picked up by Westerink for his edition of Psellos' poems.

The interesting thing is that we know that the manuscript was finished in the year 1078. This is soon after the death of Psellos, or perhaps in his final years.<sup>49</sup> Its inclusion in the Clarke manuscript proves that the poem entered instantly into wider circulation. This

<sup>46</sup> See R. Devreesse, *Codices Vaticani Graeci vol. III. Codices 604–866* (Vatican City 1950), 269.

<sup>47</sup> Description of the manuscript in: T. Gaisford, *Catalogus sive notitia manusciporum qui a cel. E. D. Clarke comparati in bibliotheca bodleiana adservantur* (Oxford 1812), 57–8.

<sup>48</sup> M. Lauxtermann, 'The Perils of Travel: Mark the Monk and *Bodl. E.D. Clarke* 15', in: Bernard and Demoen (eds), *Poetry and its Contexts*, 195–206. For the book epigrams in this manuscript, see also R. Stefec, 'Anmerkungen zu weiteren Epigrammen in epigraphischer Auszeichnungsmajuskel', *Byz* 81 (2011), 326–61, at 339–48.

<sup>49</sup> The exact date of Psellos' death is a matter of contention: after 1076, we hear nothing more from Psellos, unless we identify him with a certain Michael of Nikomedia mentioned in Attaleiates. For an overview of the matter, see A. Karpozilos, 'When Did Psellos Die?', *BZ* 96 (2003), 671–7 (who favours an identification with Michael of Nikomedia), and A. Kaldellis, 'The Date of Psellos' Death, Once Again: Psellos was not the Michael of Nikomedeia Mentioned by Attaleiates', *BZ* 104 (2011), 651–64.

happened in spite of the fact that the poem presents itself as intended to be read only by one imperial pupil. In the other manuscripts that transmit the poem, the lemmata above the poem contain dedications to various emperors, depending on the specific manuscript (in most cases it is dedicated to Monomachos). But *Bodl. Clarke 15* proves that the text was immediately read by people beyond this supposed audience of one imperial reader.

Let us now turn to the third group, the later manuscripts transmitting eleventh-century poetry. The purpose and outlook of these manuscripts can give us valuable information about the approach towards these poems taken by the Byzantine reader. Caution is needed, however: as we will see, poems could quickly come to serve totally different contexts and purposes from the ones they served in the immediate milieu of the author and the first readers. We should therefore not rashly extrapolate the reading practices of later centuries to the eleventh century.

Even a cursory glance at the transmission history of eleventh-century poetry is enough to discern two categories: Psellos' didactic poetry and all other poetry. Psellos' didactic poems are transmitted in the greatest number of manuscripts, often in dozens of them, while the bulk of other poetry survives in a limited number of manuscripts. Moreover, the character of the manuscripts containing didactic poems is different, as is the way in which they are combined with other texts. For instance, Psellos 8, the *synopsis legum*, is transmitted in several manuscripts with an exclusively juridical content. In *Paris. suppl. gr. 627* (fourteenth century), it is included together with imperial jurisdiction, and in *Vat. gr. 845* (thirteenth century) it joins contemporary legislation by Roger II of Sicily. In these manuscripts, the *Synopsis legum* probably served as a convenient glossary of juridical terms that facilitated the understanding of actual legislation. Something similar, but in an entirely different context, happened with Psellos 2, the exegesis on the Song of Songs. This poem was from an early stage inserted into the catena on the Song, mingled with the (prose) commentaries of early Church Fathers, and thus ended up in many manuscripts with an exegetical content.<sup>50</sup> Likewise, the poems

<sup>50</sup> More details in: S. Leanza, 'L'esegesi poetica di Michele Psello sul Cantico di Cantici', in: U. Criscuolo and R. Maisano (eds), *La poesia bizantina. Atti della terza Giornata di studi bizantini sotto il patrocinio della Associazione Italiana di Studi Bizantini (Macerata, 11-12 maggio 1993)* (Naples 1995), 143-61, here 146-50.



on dogma, councils, and the nomocanon (3, 4, and 5) are frequently included in manuscripts with a theological or ecclesiastical interest. For example, *Vat. gr.* 1409 is a manuscript manifestly influenced by thirteenth-century anti-Latin polemic;<sup>51</sup> as a result, it shows a great interest in dogmatic works and ecclesiastical jurisdiction, containing Eustathios of Thessalonica's *De emendanda vita monarchica*, dogmatic works of Anastasios Sinaïta and Gregory of Nyssa, and other similar writings. Between these works, evidently all in prose, one also finds Psellos' poems 1 (on the titles of the psalms), 3 (on the most important articles of faith), 4 (on councils), and 5 (on the nomocanon). It is clear that Psellos' poems were deemed suitable for inclusion on the basis of their content alone: they provided a concise summary of the subject of interest to the compiler of the manuscript.

Psellos' poems thus remained relevant, and for that reason, they were often adjusted to new contexts. A clear example of this is the adaptation of the poem on the councils (Psellos 4) in *Paris. gr.* 1712 (fourteenth century). This manuscript supplements Psellos' list of councils with all the councils that had taken place since the completion of Psellos' poem. The poem *synopsis legum* is also, in some manuscripts, augmented with additional information.<sup>52</sup> These supplements are duly written in *politikoi stichoi*, the same verse Psellos had used. Psellos 6 (on grammar), as we will see, was also frequently tampered with; notably, there were repeated attempts to put the lines of this poem in alphabetic order.<sup>53</sup> This sheds some light on the status of these poems: they were seen as lists containing useful concise information (something that the poems themselves also explicitly advertise). Later compilers and readers of Psellian didactic poetry felt free to extract verses, add some others, adapt the content, and so on. This indeed puts into perspective the 'composition' of poems: by no means are poems always stable texts crafted by a single creative artist.<sup>54</sup>

The order of the Psellian didactic poems is also an indication of the different approach that compilers took to them. Very probably, there was originally a sequence of poems consisting of poem 6 followed by

<sup>51</sup> Description in: K.-H. Uthemann, 'Der Codex Vaticanus Gr. 1409. Eine Beschreibung der Handschrift', *Byz* 53 (1983), 639–53.

<sup>52</sup> See Psellos 4.90–128 and 8.1411–24.

<sup>53</sup> See below, 248–50.

<sup>54</sup> P. Odorico, 'Poésies à la marge. Réflexions personnelles?', in: Bernard and Demoen, *Poetry and its Contexts*, 207–24.

some others (3, 4, 5, and 7 surely among them).<sup>55</sup> This sequence is almost never preserved: later manuscripts simply picked out the poems with the content that they needed for their purpose. This is in sharp contrast to the manuscripts transmitting Christophoros' poems, which almost always respect the original order, even if they fail to mention the poet's name.

Later manuscripts, it should be noted, may have had interests and purposes wholly different from the function of the texts in contemporary eleventh-century society. A good example of this is *Matrit. gr.* 4681.<sup>56</sup> This fourteenth-century manuscript has a theological and astronomical interest. It begins with Mauropous' works on the Three Hierarchs: oration 178, poems 14 to 17, and 49. These works initially had totally different purposes: the oration was pronounced on the Feast Day of the Hierarchs, the epigrams served an iconographic cycle in a church, and poem 49 adopts a polemical theological position. These different functions are also reflected by their place in Mauropous' own collection, *Vat. gr.* 676, where they are adjacent to pieces of similar context. But in the *Matritensis* they are grouped together solely on the basis of their subject, the Three Hierarchs. Moreover, they are ascribed to Psellos, which means that the special personal relationship with his patron saints that Mauropous expressed in these works is ignored. Next comes a medical work by Symeon Seth, and various other informative works of Psellos, amongst which his *De omnifaria doctrina*. Most of these are prose works, but amongst them we also find poems 1 (on the titles of the Psalms), 3 (on orthodox dogma), and 4 (on the councils). The astronomical section that follows is closed by Psellos 13 (on the movements of heaven and the soul).

The prime purpose of these manuscripts is to gather factual information about a given subject. One could call these manuscripts 'dossiers' or 'manuals'. Each manuscript had its own historically determined reasons for taking an interest in these poems, reasons that are often far removed from the purposes of reading and writing these poems at the time of their conception. The inclusion of Psellos 1 in the contemporary psalter *Bodl. Clarke* 15 makes it clear that this reuse of poems for utilitarian didactic goals is by no means a later

<sup>55</sup> See below, 127–8.

<sup>56</sup> G. De Andres, *Catalogo de los codices griegos de la biblioteca nacional* (Madrid 1987), 232–4.

habit, but was already present when the poems first began to be circulated. The reasons why compilers include a Psellian didactic poem, however, are sometimes erratic and difficult to understand. For example, one would expect poem 1 to turn up especially in psalters (as it does in of *Bodl. Clarke* 15), but this is not always the case; there is even one curious example of an early manuscript (*Vat. Barb. gr.* 520, from the late eleventh or twelfth century<sup>57</sup>) which includes a substantial fragment of the poem, while it is in fact an evangeliary.

The purposes that underlie the transmission of Psellos' didactic poems stand in contrast to those involving other poetry from the eleventh century. At first sight, it is striking that the manuscripts containing these poems are fewer in number, but generally contain more diverse poems. The overall context in which the poems appear is also markedly different. I will discuss some important manuscripts case by case.

A first manuscript to consider is *Paris. suppl. gr.* 690, dated to the twelfth century.<sup>58</sup> The manuscript has many lacunae and the original order is disturbed. What most strikes one is the heterogeneity of its content. The nine poems from Christophoros' collection that occur here cover nearly the whole range of different genres Christophoros engaged in: sophistic encomia, religious epigrams, miscellaneous descriptions of historical or personal events, invective, and riddles. The twenty-three Mauropodea include epitaphs, religious epigrams, polemics, and other genres. The manuscript also contains Psellos 10, 17, and pseudo-Psellos 62 and 91. This anthology combines too many different genres to attribute to it one distinctive feature or interest; it can be said that it is an anthology in the true sense of the word. It is dominated by texts that are themselves excerpts or summaries of other texts, often organized in ways beloved by Byzantine compilers. It has Geometres' *Metaphrasis of the Odes*, Kommerkiarios' metrical

<sup>57</sup> The manuscript is not included in Westerink's edition. For the poem of Psellos in this manuscript, see A. Jacob, 'La réception de la littérature byzantine dans l'Italie méridionale après la conquête normande', in: A. Jacob, J.-M. Martin and Gh. Noyé (eds), *Histoire et culture dans l'Italie byzantine* (Rome 2006), 21–67, esp. 56. Jacob dates the manuscript to the twelfth century; E. Follieri, 'Epigrammi sugli evangelisti dai codici Barberiniani greci 352 e 520', *Bollettino della Badia greca di Grottaferrata* 10 (1956), 61–80, 135–56, at 65–7, to the late eleventh century.

<sup>58</sup> In contrast to the dating to the eleventh century in G. Rochefort, 'Une anthologie grecque du XIe siècle: le Parisinus suppl. gr. 690', *Scriptorium* 4.1 (1950), 3–17; see, for the later dating and a partial description Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 329–33.

*Life of Maria of Egypt*, a metrical (and alphabetical) rendering of the *Oneirokritikon*, many short gnomic poems (Pisides, Gregory of Nazianzos, and others), and various gnomologies. Moreover, it has an interest in parody and wit, testified by the presence of the *Batrachomyomachia* and some of Lucian's dialogues. The inclusion of the short poem pseudo-Psellos 91, a poem on the art of versification, may even indicate an interest in poetry specifically. In short, the manuscript offers the reader easily digestible fragments, be the content devotional, informative (of a more eclectic kind), occasional, or sophistic. The poetry from our poets apparently fulfilled this purpose.

Another manuscript distinguished by the quantity of eleventh-century poetry is *Marc. gr. 524*.<sup>59</sup> The complicated history and arrangement of this manuscript, mostly dated to the thirteenth century, is the subject of current research.<sup>60</sup> It suffices for our present purpose to observe that it is a collection of several cahiers, made over an extended period and by more than one scribe. The first part of the present manuscript has a section of eleventh-century poems, most of them anonymous, except for some Christophorea. Elsewhere in the manuscript, especially famous for its twelfth-century epigrams, we find four separate sections containing Christophorean poems (without ascription; some poems even occur twice). In each of these sections, the poems are arranged in the same order as in the Grottaferrata manuscript, so it is likely that the scribe had an original collection of Christophoros before him. All kinds of genres with which Christophoros engaged are represented: religious epigrams, occasional poems, sophistic *Spielereien*, riddles, invectives, etc.

*Vat. gr. 1276* is another manuscript in which eleventh-century poetry is prominent.<sup>61</sup> The manuscript was written in the Terra d'Otranto in the fourteenth century. It was probably compiled in a

<sup>59</sup> The most detailed description so far is S. Lambros, "Ο Μαρκανός κώδιξ 524", *NE* 8 (1911), 3–59, 123–92; for some general remarks, see also W. Hörandner, 'Epigrams on Icons and Sacred Objects. The Collection of Cod. Marc. gr. 524 once again', in: M. Salvatore (ed.), *La poesia tardoantica e medievale. Atti del I Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Macerata, 4–5 maggio 1998* (Alessandria 2001), 117–24; and P. Odorico and C. Messis, 'L'anthologie comnène du Cod. Marc. gr. 524: problèmes d'édition et problèmes d'évaluation', in: *L'épistolographie et la poésie épigrammatique* (Paris 2003), 191–213.

<sup>60</sup> At the time of finalizing this book, the doctoral thesis of Foteini Spingou on the subject was nearing completion.

<sup>61</sup> P. Acconcia Longo and A. Jacob, 'Une anthologie salentine du XIVe siècle: le Vaticanus gr. 1276', *RSBN* 19 (1982), 149–228.

milieu of Greek-speaking, anti-Latin clerics, keen to preserve Byzantine religious and cultural identity.<sup>62</sup> The heterogeneity of the manuscript is probably due to its history as a progressive collective enterprise, which makes it difficult to consider it as a unified whole. It assembles texts of a grammatical or theological (especially dogmatic) kind, as well as inscriptions, and poems by Prodromos, Stoudites, and poets of the region (Nikolaos-Nektarios of Casole among others). Poems by Psellos (22, 24, 16, 17, 19) and Christophoros (31) are also present. These poems are of a polemical or occasional nature. The final section of the manuscript betrays interest in anti-Western theological polemics, and this probably motivated the inclusion of pseudo-Psellian poem 57 and the genuine poem 4 (on the councils). The fact that many of the eleventh-century poems appear between grammatical material suggests that they were copied here for purposes of education. We may also surmise that Christophoros' poems appeared as a model, and quite literally so: the poems of the Otranto poets inspired by his iambic calendar follow immediately upon their example.<sup>63</sup>

*Hauniensis* 1899 (thirteenth century) is also an important manuscript to consider.<sup>64</sup> It is a small manuscript, comprising only one quaternion. Apart from some miscellaneous theological treatises, it contains an interesting collection of poetry. After some poems of Geometres and his milieu, we find all three of the major eleventh-century poets: Christophoros (16, 36, 15, 14, 11), Mauropous (30), and Psellos (33, 20, 31, and pseudo-Pselliana), as well as some religious epigrams.<sup>65</sup> It can be assumed that this whole section is based on an earlier anthology of specifically eleventh-century, or early twelfth-century, poetry (for Nikolaos Kerkyraios is frequently mentioned, albeit erroneously). The compiler did not care much

<sup>62</sup> Acconcia Longo and Jacob, 'Anthologie salentine', 165.

<sup>63</sup> About the indebtedness of many Otranto poems in this manuscript to Christophoros, see Acconcia Longo and Jacob, 176–7.

<sup>64</sup> Descriptions of the manuscript: B. Schartau, *Codices graeci Haunienses. Ein deskriptiver Katalog des griechischen Handschriftenbestandes der Königlichen Bibliothek Kopenhagen* (Copenhagen 1994), 157–9 (where it is dated to XII–XIIIc.); C. Graux, *Notices sommaires des manuscrits grecs de la grande Bibliothèque royale de Copenhague* (Paris 1879), 276–80; for a description of the poetic section of the manuscript, see Westerink, *Poemata*, pp. viii–ix. All these descriptions contain omissions, false ascriptions and/or other errors. See now J. Christensen, 'Inedita from the MS. Hauniensis 1899', *Βυζαντινά Σύμμεκτα* 21 (2011), 339–49.

<sup>65</sup> These epigrams are now edited in Christensen, 'Inedita'.

about the identity of the poets: only one poem of Christophoros is ascribed correctly, Mauropous' poem is anonymous, whereas Psellos is given more credit than he deserves. Unlike other manuscripts containing Christophorea, the original order of his collection has not been preserved; this too suggests that the manuscript did not take these poems from a copy of his collection, but rather from an anthology of several different authors.

The different character of all these anthologies, in comparison with the first type of manuscripts, transmitting Psellos' didactic poems, is abundantly clear. The anthologies preserve the extreme generic diversity already present in the original collections. This diversity of subject and genre stands in sharp contrast to the specialist nature of the informative manuscripts of the first group. This would tend to elicit an aestheticizing reading in which the reader dissociates himself from the direct purpose of the message. For instance, the fact that manuscripts of the second group often select religious epigrams together with invectives and decidedly profane poetry indicates that the reading of these religious epigrams was motivated by an interest in formal features rather than a response to their devotional message. The possible educational purpose of the anthologies may be an important factor in this respect. The heterogeneous outlook of these manuscripts suggests that poems were not directly collected into books, but probably first into small bundles, or cahiers. One of these bundles, the present *Hauniensis*, may have remained in that state. Others were later bundled into larger books. As a result, these books display a very diverse content. *Vat. gr. 1276* is a notable example. Moreover, these anthologies show more awareness of the particularity of poetic texts. Poems are mostly grouped together and are separated from the prose texts, if such are present. This stands in contrast to the informative dossiers, which intermingle prose and poetry without any differentiation.

### 3.1.3. Visual aspects of reading poetry

When studying the reading practices of Byzantine poetry, Byzantinists have at their disposal one considerable advantage compared to, for example, classical poetry: in quite a few cases, we still have the texts before us in the very same material and visual circumstances in which a contemporary Byzantine saw them. This can help us to see how the visual representation of poems to the contemporary reader

responded to his reading expectations, and guided him in his reading experience.

The manuscript *Vat. gr. 676*, laid out by the poet Ioannes Mauropous himself, as we will see,<sup>66</sup> is an excellent place to start. When looking at the poetic section of this book, we notice that verses are arranged neatly per page: there are always twenty-four verses on each page. The scribe also attempted to justify his lines, so that every verse line stops more or less at the same point, giving the neat impression of a dense square. In Figure 3.1, showing the end of Mauropous 5 and the beginning of Mauropous 6, one can see that the scribe of *Vat. gr. 676* strove to achieve the same length for every verse, sometimes stretching the final letters (as in the first line of poem 6), or instead using abbreviations (as in the fourth line on the page). Every verse is clearly terminated by punctuation, mostly a dot above the line. The *mise en page* thus attempts to reflect faithfully that verses are self-contained and equal units, both visually and acoustically. As Lauxtermann observed, Byzantine verse is structured on the principle of *isokola*, known from ancient rhetorical theory;<sup>67</sup> consequently, Byzantine poetry generally strives after ‘isometry’, whereby verses are of equal length and equal duration in acoustic performance.<sup>68</sup> The justification of lines reinforces this aspect of equality between verses.

When surveying eleventh-century manuscripts containing poetry (mostly this concerns book epigrams) we can deduce some recurrent principles in the organization of verse. The end of the verse line is nearly always marked by a dot or double dot (as is also the case in *Vat. gr. 676*). As a rule, poetry is written line by line, in a vertical alignment, or in columns that are sometimes to be read horizontally (as in the *Cryptensis* of Christophoros).<sup>69</sup> In cases where poetry is written continuously, the separation of verses is mostly indicated in other ways. For instance, in the gospel *Vat. Barb. gr. 520* (late eleventh or twelfth century), fol. 3r, the book epigram inc. ‘*Ἡ τετραὸς ὦδε*’ is written continuously, but the initial letter of each verse is emphatically larger, and there is a dot (*colon*) at the end of each verse

<sup>66</sup> See below, 129–33.

<sup>67</sup> M. Lauxtermann, ‘The Velocity of Pure Iambs. Byzantine Observations on the Metre and Rhythm of the Dodecasyllable’, *JÖB* 48 (1998), 9–33.

<sup>68</sup> M. Lauxtermann, *The Spring of Rhythm. An Essay on the Political Verse and Other Byzantine Metres* (Vienna 1999), 42, 71, and elsewhere.

<sup>69</sup> J. Irigoien, ‘Livre et texte dans les manuscrits byzantins de poètes’, in: *Libro e testo* (Urbino 1984), 85–102.

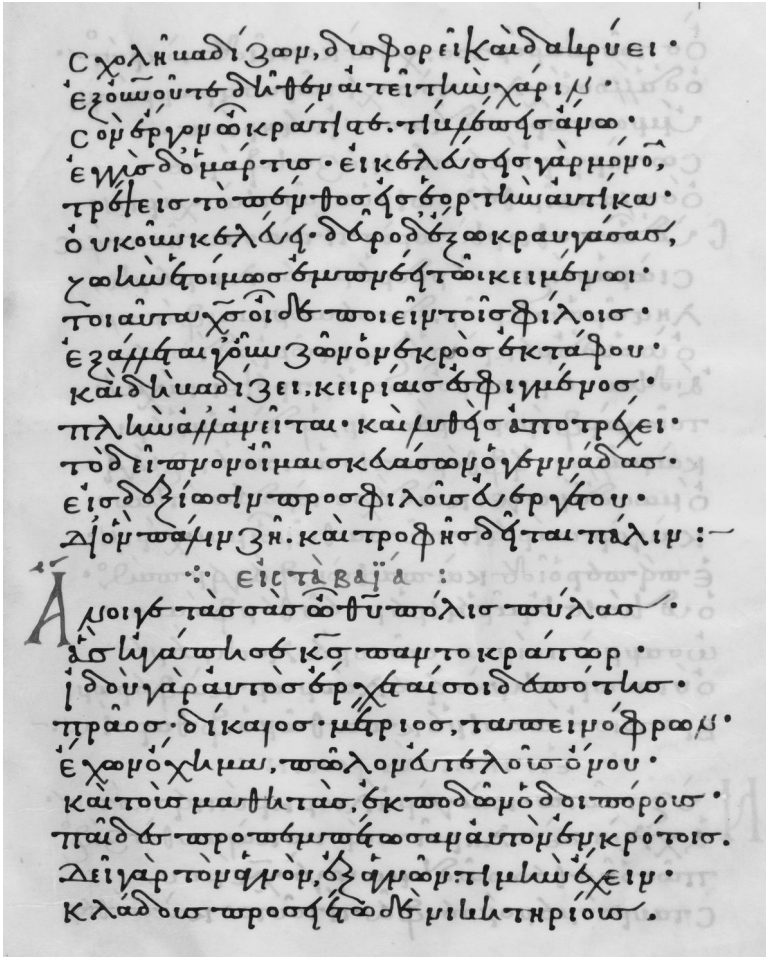


Figure 3.1 *Vat. gr. 676, fol. 4r*, showing the visual equivalent of ‘isometry’.  
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(see Figure 3.2). The verse structure of the text is thus systematically made apparent by the visual layout of the manuscript.

But there is more: in the example of the *Vat. Barb. gr. 520*, even the caesura (*Binnenschluss*) is marked by dots.<sup>70</sup> In the first verse, for

<sup>70</sup> The *Binnenschluss* is an internal rhythmical pause in the Byzantine dodecasyllable, either after the fifth or the seventh syllable. It always coincides with a word break and normally occurs at a meaningful semantic and/or grammatical divide, marking a



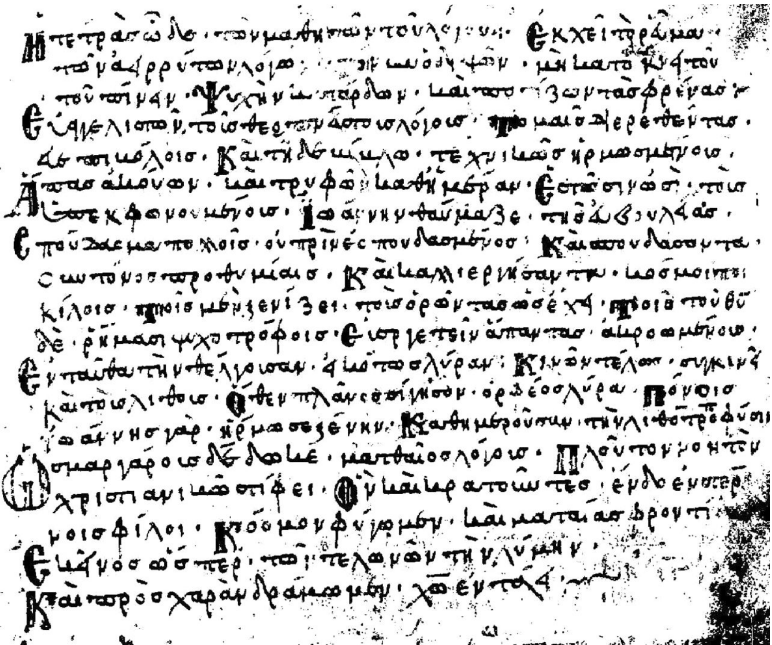


Figure 3.2 Vat. Barb. gr. 520, fol. 3r, showing verse laid out without line breaks, but with verse ends and caesuras punctuated. © 2013 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

instance, we see a dot above the line at the verse pause after the fifth syllable (after the words *ἡ τετράς ὄδε*). Likewise, at the next page, containing Psellos' poem 1 (in *politikoi stichoi*), rhythmical caesurae are indicated with a dot above the line. It seems (but exhaustive research would need to be done) that this habit was adopted by many Byzantine scribes; some book epigrams in a tenth-century psalter (*Bodl. Auct. D 4 1*) show the same practice.<sup>71</sup> In *Londin. Add. 17470*, an eleventh-century manuscript containing mainly

respiratory pause (therefore, it is not exactly a 'caesura', although the term is widely used; 'internal verse pause' would perhaps be more exact). See P. Maas, 'Der byzantinische Zwölfsilber', *BZ* 12 (1903), 278–323, at 281–4, and Lauxtermann, *Spring of Rhythm*, 71–3.

<sup>71</sup> See I. Ševčenko, 'Captions to a David Cycle in the Tenth-Century Oxford *Auct. D. 4. 1*', in: C. Scholz and G. Makris (eds), *Πολύλευρος νοῦς. Miscellanea für Peter Schreiner zu seinem 60. Geburtstag* (Munich/Leipzig 2000), 324–41, here 326–9; W. Hörandner, 'Weitere Beobachtungen zu byzantinischen Figurengedichten und Tetragrammen', *Νέα Ρώμη* 6 (2009), 291–304, here 298.

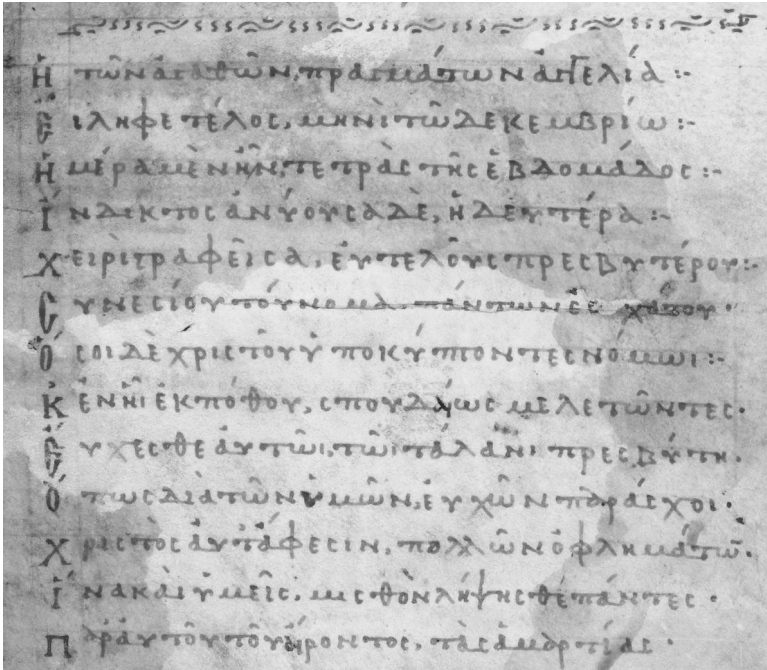


Figure 3.3 *London. Add. 17470*, fol. 285r, showing punctuation of the caesura. © The British Library Board

works by Maximos the Confessor, we encounter at the end a thirteen-verse book epigram (fol. 285r; see Figure 3.3). At the end of the verse, we find a dot above the line, and at each caesura, whether after the fifth or the seventh syllable, the scribe put a comma.

This rhythmical punctuation has absolute priority over grammatical punctuation. There is no separation of grammatical sentences or word groups, but only of rhythmical units. This suggests that Byzantines were very conscious of the accentual structure of their verse, be it dodecasyllables or *politikoi stichoi*, although their theoretical metrical treatises pass over it in silence. While being a purely acoustic phenomenon, this accentual pattern must have been so ingrained in the Byzantines' minds that it has left visual traces. This also implies that scribes or readers pronounced these verses aloud when writing, or reading, them on the page.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>72</sup> See also (for prose) D. R. Reinsch, 'Stixis und Hören', in: B. Atsalos & N. Tsironi (eds), *Actes du VIe colloque international de paléographie grecque (Drama 21-7 September 2003)* (Athens 2008), 259-69.

There are some visual features that are especially visible in book epigrams and that make their paratextual status evident. The majority of book epigrams are preceded by a sign indicating the beginning of the poem, sometimes a simple cross, sometimes four dots arranged in a square (❖). This sign is also used for other paratextual material (titles, prose subscriptions, etc.). It seems to have grown into a habit: even poems that are already very clearly separate are preceded by a four-dot cross of this kind. The script is another element that makes poetry stand out, especially paratextual poetry, from the main (prose) text. In many Byzantine manuscripts of this period, titles, indices, and other additional material are written in majuscule script (mostly the so-called *Alexandrinische Auszeichnungsmajuskel*), in contrast to the main text, which is written in minuscule.<sup>73</sup> This is often reinforced by the use of different ink: instead of black ink, red or even gold is used for book epigrams.

More particularly, book epigrams are often written in a majuscule of the epigraphic type, imitating the letters used for 'real' stone inscriptions.<sup>74</sup> In this way, the function of 'epigram' (literally, something written 'on' something else)<sup>75</sup> is made clear in a directly visible way. For instance, the poem inc. *τοὺς μαργάρους σου τῶν λόγων* in *Vindob. suppl. gr.* 4 (eleventh century), fol. 5r (see Figure 3.4) is written in *epigraphische Auszeichnungsmajuskel*.<sup>76</sup> It is also framed by a decorative line. Here too we may see an attempt to justify the verse lines: at the end of the second verse, the ending *-ων* is written with a broad omega, whereas in the same combination at the end of verse eight the omega is condensed into a small superscript letter. In this way, both verse lines end at the same distance from the right border, and this visual equality of the verse lines emphasizes their rhythmical equality.

<sup>73</sup> H. Hunger, 'Minuskel und Auszeichnungsschriften im 10.-12. Jahrhundert', in: J. Glénisson, J. Bompaire, and J. Irigoien (eds), *La paléographie grecque et byzantine* (Paris 1977), 201–20; G. Cavallo, 'Funzione e struttura della maiuscola greca tra i secoli VIII–XI', in: Glénisson e.a., *Paléographie grecque*, 95–137, here 109.

<sup>74</sup> Hunger, 'Minuskel und Auszeichnungsschriften', 207; H. Hunger, 'Die epigraphische Auszeichnungsmajuskel. Beitrag zu einem bisher kaum beachteten Kapitel der griechischen Paläographie', *JÖB* 26 (1977), 193–210. For examples of book epigrams executed in epigraphic majuscule, see R. Stefec, 'Anmerkungen zu einigen handschriftlich überlieferten Epigrammen in epigraphischer Auszeichnungsmajuskel', *JÖB* 59 (2009), 203–12, and id., 'Weiteren Epigrammen'.

<sup>75</sup> Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 29–30.

<sup>76</sup> See Hunger, 'Auszeichnungsmajuskel', 195.

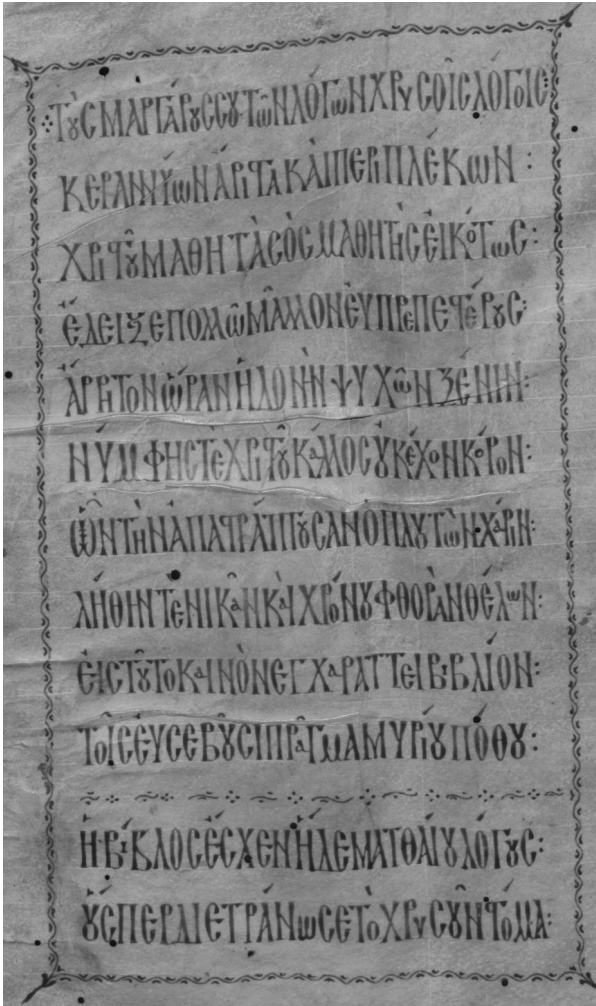


Figure 3.4 *Vindob. suppl. gr. 4, fol. 5r*, showing a book epigram in *Epigraphische Auszeichnungmajuskel*. © ÖNB Vienna: *Cod. Suppl. gr. 4, fol. 5r*

The attempt to create an ‘inscriptional’ appearance is also evident in those epigrams that are written around a miniature: the layout of the letters perfectly imitates the inscribed border around icons. We can see this, for example, in the Barberini Psalter (*Vat. Barb. gr. 372*, latter half eleventh century), where a book epigram (inc. οὐς ἡ τριφεγγής; fol. 5r) is framed around a miniature depicting (probably) Konstantinos X Doukas, Eudokia, and Michael VII



Figure 3.5 *Vat. Barb. gr. 372, fol. 5r*, showing a book epigram around a miniature of Konstantinos X Doukas, Michael VII, and Eudokia Makrembolitissa. © 2013 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

(Figure 3.5).<sup>77</sup> The letters form an imaginative border around the image, as if it were a tangible icon. This by implication brings the

<sup>77</sup> I. Spatharakis, *The Portrait in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts* (Leiden 1976), 26–36; image: plate 7.

book into the category of ‘object’. The context of the book makes no difference for the reading of the poem than if it were, say, placed upon a reliquary.

When we compare poetic paratexts with paratexts in prose, it remains the case that poetic paratexts stand out as more special. In the famous Theodore Psalter (*Londin. Add.* 19.352) from 1066, the poetic colophons (fols. 207v, 208r) are written in an epigraphic majuscule, using golden ink, whereas the prose colophons are written as normal text—that is, in a minuscule script.<sup>78</sup>

In isolated cases, the visual arrangement of poems is elaborated into a visual game, playing with acrostics, figure poems, and the like. In *Paris. gr.* 922, dedicated to the empress Eudokia Makrembolitissa, the verse *Εὐδοκίας ἡ δέλτος ἀγούστης πέλει* turns up as a labyrinth poem and as the acrostic of another poem.<sup>79</sup> In these cases, the visual games that are played profit greatly from the poetic form of the text, and vice versa.

However, these epigrams were no mere decoration: they were there on the page to be read. Hence the ‘reading aids’ that in some cases steer the sense and direction of reading. In the epigram in the Barberini psalter (Figure 3.5), each verse is accompanied by a number ( $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $\gamma$ , and  $\delta$ ), added to the left of the verse. These numbers indicate the order in which the epigram should be read. A similar numbering system is present in an epigram in *Haun.* 1343 (eleventh century), fol. 1r, which is also written in a four-sided frame around a dedicatory miniature.<sup>80</sup> It should be noted that while the order in the Barberini psalter is top-left-right-bottom, the order in the *Hauniensis* is top-right-left-bottom. The latter order is the most frequent one in epigrams that follow a frame-like pattern (in books as well as on objects), but there are many exceptions.<sup>81</sup> These numbered indications are certainly not the rule: in *Sinait. gr.* 364, fol. 3r, we have similarly an epigram of four verses around a miniature, but here

<sup>78</sup> Images of the Theodore Psalter are available on The British Library website, <[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?index=5&ref=Add\\_MS\\_19352](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?index=5&ref=Add_MS_19352)> (last accessed 31 May 2012).

<sup>79</sup> On this poem, see W. Hörandner, ‘Visuelle Poesie in Byzanz. Versuch einer Bestandsaufnahme’, *JÖB* 40 (1990), 1–42, here at 18–20.

<sup>80</sup> A clear image on: <<http://www.kb.dk/permalink/2006/manus/105/dan/1+recto/>>. For the dating and a description, see Schartau, *Codices graeci Haunienses*, 119–20.

<sup>81</sup> See E. Follieri, ‘L’ordine dei versi in alcuni epigrammi bizantini’, *Byz* 34 (1964), 447–67. Follieri does not report numbering systems as in the two manuscripts mentioned here.

there are no indications about the order in which we should read the verses.<sup>82</sup>

### 3.2. TWO ACCOUNTS OF READINGS

We now move from the direct tangible presentation of poems to indirect witnesses of contemporary readings of poetry. While we have already noted that Byzantines did not reflect upon the practices of reading and writing poetry in general, they did sometimes record, or respond to, contemporary instances of individuals reading one single poem. We focus on two such accounts, one in Mauropous, and one in Christophoros. In both of these ‘reading stories’, ‘normal’ poems are followed by another poem that responds to the reaction of a reader who has apparently read the first poem(s). As a result, these two accounts can help us to form an image of the expectations that both author and reader held about the reading of poetry.

#### 3.2.1. Reading a funeral oration: Christophoros 75–79

Christophoros’ poems 75 to 77 form a cycle of funeral poems for his sister Anastaso. The poems are each situated at a different stage of the funeral ceremony: we follow Christophoros as he speaks at a gathering around the bier (75), the funeral procession (76), and finally the funeral itself (77). The cycle of poems varies in metre, as is often the case in Christophoros’ cycles: 75 is a poem in anacreontics, 76 and 77 are in dodecasyllables.

The poem that follows immediately after the cycle (78) bears the following title: ‘For the *grammatikos* Petros, who had asked for Christophoros’ funeral iambs on his sister, but who kept them a long time, and had not yet got round to returning them.’<sup>83</sup> The words ‘funeral iambs’ refer to poem 77, in which Christophoros mourns the death of his sister. In poem 78 proper, Christophoros asks in jest if

<sup>82</sup> Image in Spatharakis, *Portrait*, fig. 66. See also below, 319–20.

<sup>83</sup> Christophoros 78.title: *Εἰς τὸν γραμματικὸν Πέτρον, αἰτήσαντα τὰ εἰς τὴν ἀδελφὴν ἐπιτάφια ἰαμβεῖα, κατασχόντα δὲ χρόνον πολὺν καὶ μήπως φθάσαντα ἀποδοῦναι.*

Petros perhaps had found some lotus in his verses, and requests that Petros return them, after having read them several times.

This has several implications. First, we can infer that Christophoros' verses for his sister had become known of within a circle of friends. Whether these readers had been part of the audience during the funeral service is impossible to ascertain. In any case, Petros knew that these verses existed and had asked for them. Christophoros granted his request and lent them out. This suggests that he did not sell copies of his poems. There was no system of publishing, but rather an informal habit of lending. It also appears that he did not himself take the initiative to have his verses circulated, since Petros had asked for them; but this might be a self-aggrandizing misrepresentation on Christophoros' part. The mere fact that he asks for them back suggests that there were not many copies circulating, and that Christophoros in fact did not intend them to circulate in public. Also, Petros had only asked for these specific 'iambos', as is made clear by the title of 78. In addition, Christophoros refers clearly to these verses as one separate entity. Consequently, the poem must have been handed over separately. I would suggest that this can only have happened in the form of a scroll; that is, a separate leaf of parchment.

In fact, the story does not end there. As appears from poem 79, Petros had returned the verses, adding some comments. Poem 79 is Christophoros' response to these comments. The text of this poem is heavily damaged. The implications of the remaining scraps of text, however, are so important that I give them here in full:

*Ἐτεροι εἰς τὸν αὐτόν, πέμψαντα τοὺς στίχους καὶ . . .*  
*Ἐκείνο τοῦ σοῦ Χριστοφόρου πυνθάνη,*  
*εἰ ταῦτα πενθῶν, ποῖα γοῦν χαίρων γράφω*  
*. . . γνώσεως καὶ τῶν λόγων*  
*τί κομψὸν εἶχε τὰ γραφέντα καὶ μέγα;*  
*. . . οὐδενὸς γέμον,* 5  
*ποίαν δὲ καινὴν καὶ ξενίζουσαν φράσιν*  
*. . . ποικίλην*  
*πενθοῦντος αὐτοῦ τοῦ γράφοντος, ὡς ἔφης,*  
*. . .*  
*ὡς ἢ λέγουσα μαρτυρεῖ παροιμία,* 10  
*. . .*  
*ὁμῶς ἂν εὖρες ἄξιόν τι καὶ λόγου,*  
*. . .*  
*δόξαν χορηγῶ τῶν καλῶν θεῶ δίδου.*



The damaged text makes it difficult to ascertain the exact details of Petros' comments. In any event, it appears that the second and eighth lines repeat a question posed by Petros along the lines of: 'How could you write this while in mourning?' As Kristoffel Demoen has shown, this is not to be taken in a negative manner:<sup>84</sup> in the eyes of Petros, Christophoros would write still better if the occasion were not such a painful one; what would the result be if Christophoros were writing verse in favourable circumstances? If we then take the words *κομψότης* (v. 4) and *ποικίλη* (7) in a positive light, this poem can be interpreted as mainly a declaration of (false) modesty. Christophoros asks: 'What elegance or greatness had these writings anyway?' (v. 4), and then closes with what sounds like a typically humble answer in response to laudatory comments: 'If you really found something worth speaking of, then give the honour to God, the bestower of all good things' (vv. 12–14). Moreover, the fact that Christophoros in the first verse calls himself 'your Christophoros' indicates that this Petros was not an opponent of Christophoros but, rather, an intimate friend.

Petros' reading of the poem, as it appears from poem 79, concentrated on its stylistic and rhetorical features. At lines 6 and 7 it appears that Petros had found some fine rhetorical qualities in Christophoros' poem: 'a novel and surprising style', and something 'varied'. As we may surmise from the end of the damaged line 3, Christophoros' poem had displayed, in Petros' eyes, a great wealth of knowledge and rhetorical skill. In sum, what Petros had paid close attention to were the technical properties of Christophoros' poem. We may recall here that Petros is a teacher, as the title of poem 78 indicates (*γραμματικός*). We can expect this kind of teacher to show above all an interest in the formal features of a text. Petros had read the poem as he would have read any other (written) text under review by a schoolmaster. In an atmosphere of friendly discussion, this teacher is here reading the text of another intellectual and assessing it on the terms customary in their milieu. The reader in this reading situation is not the audience for which the poem purports to have been intended (the audience at the funeral).

<sup>84</sup> See K. Demoen, 'Phrasis poikilê. Imitatio and variatio in the poetry book of Christophoros Mitylenaios', in: A. Rhoby and E. Schiffer (eds), *Imitatio—Aemulatio—Variatio. Akten des internationalen wissenschaftlichen Symposions zur byzantinischen Sprache und Literatur* (Vienna 2010), 103–18; C. Crimi et al., *Cristoforo di Mitilene. Canzoniere* (Catania 1983), 123. By contrast, Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 46, thinks that Petros considered Christophoros' poem as hypocritical: he should not show off with his sophisticated writing if he is sincerely mourning.

However, in Petros' reading as reported by Christophoros, Petros considered the concrete initial circumstances of this poem as 'real'. The biographical details given in the poem are taken as real: Petros took it for granted that Christophoros was in mourning (for he admires him for writing such beautiful verses in this sad state). He was also ready to identify this mourning persona with the author of the poem from whom he borrowed some verse. At the same time, this impression of reality does not preclude a reading that focuses on the text as a display of learning and rhetorical skills, as appears from the kinds of comment given by Petros. Hence, the written poem, even at this early stage, is no longer merely the script of an oral speech: it becomes a text that can be compared to other written texts. It is an intellectual achievement. This shows that the initial context of a given poem is not the only context in which these texts could have a meaningful function in the eyes of both the author and his milieu.

Moreover, Christophoros was probably aware of this interest when he composed poem 77 itself. From line 88, he seems to declare (the text is damaged at this point) that everyone will have something different to say in praise of Anastaso (see esp. v. 90). He stresses that all these praises must be genuine (v. 100), and then we find, at v. 102: 'lest we should appear, if we will want to write . . .'.<sup>85</sup> I do not know exactly what to make of these damaged verses, but the verb *γράφειν*, apparently in reference to this very poem, indicates that Christophoros presented his text here as a written text, in spite of the oral context evoked elsewhere in the poem. These remarks may indicate that this text was intended to live beyond its primary short-lived context, as a written text. As a result, even if we cannot completely rule out an original oral setting, the poem itself may have already anticipated a sophisticated and dissociated reading such as the one performed by Petros.

### 3.2.2. Reading an inscription: Mauropous 32–33

Poem 32 of Mauropous is an epigram on a religious image, comprising only three verses. It was designed to be inscribed on, or near to, a depiction of the Crucifixion of Christ that was made of gold.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Christophoros 77.120: *μή πως φανώμεν, εἰ θελήσομεν γράφειν.*

<sup>86</sup> D. Bianconi, 'Et le livre s'est fait poésie', in: P. Odorico, M. Hinterberger, and P. Agapitos (eds), «*Doux remède . . .*» *Poésie et poétique à Byzance* (Paris 2008), 15–35, here 29, observes that the title implies that the poem was not written on the

*Εἰς σταύρωσιν χρυσῆν  
 Κἀνταῦθα Χριστός ἐστὶν ὑπνῶν ἐν ξύλῳ.  
 φέρει δὲ χρυσὸς τοῦ πάθους τῆν εἰκόνα,  
 ἀνθ' οὗ πραθείς, ἔσωσε τοὺς κατ' εἰκόνα.*

*On a golden Crucifixion*

*Here too, Christ is asleep on wood.  
 The gold bears the image of his passion,  
 because sold for gold, he saved those in his image.*

This epigram justifies the use of gold for this depiction: it was the price for which Christ himself was betrayed, and thus the price he paid for the salvation of mankind (although, strictly speaking, Christ was of course betrayed for silver). Consequently, the gold of the cross here has only symbolic significance: Mauropous invites his readers to interpret the depiction nevertheless as the wooden cross of Christ (hence v. 1: *κἀνταῦθα*: 'also here'). It is a conventional epigram, exploiting an antithetical and paradoxical relation between the material representation of the religious object and its true spiritual meaning.

The reader addressed by this epigram, at least in a primary sense, is the beholder of the image, who seeks explanation for the fact that this portrayal is carried out in gold. The referent 'here' (v. 1) unmistakably brings to life the physical reality of the inscriptional space already indicated by the lemma. In a literal sense, then, the context evoked is that of an inscriptional space, with a reader who is at the same time the viewer of the image and the inscription. So far, so good; epigrams such as this appear in abundance in the collected poems of Christophoros and Mauropous, and as anonymous pieces in other manuscripts. But this time, the epigram is followed by another poem that puts this literal reading into an entirely different perspective.

Poem 33 bears the title: 'Against the man who criticised the verse *ἀνθ' οὗ πραθείς*, because the preposition is not rightly construed.' Apparently, a reader had found fault with a grammatical issue in poem 32. He remarked that the verb 'sell' (\**πικράσκω*) should govern a plain genitive case, and should not be followed by the preposition *ἀντί*, as Mauropous had written (see, indeed, v. 3 of poem 32). In

cross itself, as this would have been indicated by the word *σταυρός*. He suggests that the Crucifixion was a miniature executed with gold paint. I thank Marc Lauxtermann for help with the interpretation and translation of this epigram.

poem 33 itself, Mauropous addresses this opponent and defends his choice in representing the betrayal of Christ as a sale by using the preposition *ἀντί*. Hence, Mauropous reacts here to a reading of the epigram that focuses on the formal features of the poem. This reader did not respond at all to the message that the poem conveys on a first level, nor did Mauropous expect that he would do so. Nowhere in poem 33 does Mauropous come back to the content of the poem; he only argues that *ἀντί* makes the message more clear, and thus aptly renders the message of salvation.

This reader was surely no fortuitous passer-by. He was, again, a teacher; this becomes evident from the verse ‘So great is the hair-splitting of schoolmasters!’<sup>87</sup> and from the remark that he applied the *schedos* as an educational exercise (v. 33). This man, therefore, was a colleague (and rival) of Mauropous: a professional reader, one might say. Unfortunately, it does not become clear in what form our schoolmaster had read the epigram. A first possibility is that he read it as an inscription in its original place, by visiting a church, viewing an object, or opening up a book with miniatures. But in that case, he must have known that the poem was by Mauropous’ hand, otherwise he could not have addressed the critique to him; and inscriptions are nearly always anonymous. Therefore, it is more likely that he picked up the verses when they had already been written down on paper and were enjoying a first limited circulation within intellectual milieux.

The readings recorded in these two examples of Christophoros and Mauropous suggest that the poems have become an object of reading amongst a circle of the author’s peers. These readers employ reading strategies focusing on grammar and rhetoric. For them, texts are intellectual achievements, to be read as proofs (or refutations) of the personal abilities of the author. They become a ‘sign of a sign’:<sup>88</sup> that is, their signification does not primarily lie in the message that the text conveys, but in the way in which this text displays the abilities and skills of the author.

This allows us to imagine a circle of readers commenting upon each other’s writings and addressing poems in answer to each other.

<sup>87</sup> Mauropous 33.17: τῆς ἀκριβείας τῶν διδασκάλων ὄση!

<sup>88</sup> This felicitous expression is taken from I. Toth, ‘Rhetorical Theatron in Late Byzantium: The Example of Palaiologan Imperial Orations’, in: M. Grünbart (ed.), *Theatron. Rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter* (Berlin/New York 2007), 429–48, esp. 446–8, focusing on a similar process in late Byzantine panegyrics.

We may surmise that these circles consisted mainly of our poets' peers: that is, teachers, who probably also engaged in poetry themselves. These are the readers with the cultural background required to engage in reading and to join in collective intellectual practices.<sup>89</sup> Within this tight social context, it is only logical that these readers tried hard to give evidence of their superior reading skills by providing specialist comments, whether negative or positive. This desire to highlight one's own abilities by delivering critique in this way will reappear in other chapters. These texts, therefore, did have a significance beyond the ephemeral occasion for which they were ostensibly written, and this intellectualization (if one may so call it) of texts started immediately, perhaps even at the very first moment the audience heard the mourning poem or an observer saw the inscription.

The main problem with these two examples is that they are not objective records of readings. It is significant that both Christophoros and Mauropous took the effort to respond to these readers' comments with an answer that was, once more, made in verse. They not only register a reading, but they also play an active role in shaping the reader's role. In fact, these poems prescribe a certain reading strategy to follow. In the case of Christophoros 78, the poet demonstrates, in an indirect way, through Petros' reaction, the technical merits of poem 77. In Mauropous' case, poem 33 can remind the readers of his collection that they should not read his poems in a pettifogging way. So these particular readings stand as a model (negative or positive) for subsequent readings. The authors are taking control of the reading of their poems.

### 3.3. CONTEMPORARY CIRCULATION OF POETRY

The social radius of reading that emerges from these two reading accounts is one in which the poet could hold a tight control over the initial circulation and reception of his poems. He knows his readers personally, and they belong to the same milieu. This becomes even more apparent in Christophoros 84. This poem is addressed to a

<sup>89</sup> For competent readers as opposed to uncultivated readers, see Cavallo, *Lire*, 35–46.

certain Basileios, who bears the unfortunate surname ‘Choirinos’, meaning ‘piggish’, a name that Christophoros exploits here to great effect. We learn from the title that Basileios had often asked for Christophoros’ writings. Christophoros denies him this privilege and, in passing, sneers at his wife’s unfaithfulness. The poem abounds with wordplay at various levels:<sup>90</sup> crucial is the double meaning of *κεράτιον*, diminutive of *κέρας*, both ‘carob’ or ‘St John’s bread’ (a typical food for pigs) and the proverbial ‘horns’ of a cuckolded husband. *βάλανος* (acorn) also possibly carries a double entendre—the acorn and the penis glans—which would fit the rather nasty tone of the poem.

*Εἰς τὸν Βασίλειον τὸν λεγόμενον Χοιρινόν, πολλάκις αἰτήσαντα ἐκ τῶν συγγραμμάτων αὐτοῦ*

*Τί πολλά γρύζεις τοὺς ἐμούς ζητῶν λόγους  
καὶ «σαῖς γραφαῖς θρέψον με» συχνῶς μοι λέγεις;  
ἄπελθε πόρρω· χοῖρος οὐ τρώγει μέλι·  
ἔχεις βάλανους δεῖπνον, εἰ βούλει, φίλον·  
ἂν οὖν μάλιστα καὶ κερατίων δέη,  
ἢ σύζυγος πλήσει σε καὶ κερατίων.* 5

*For Basileios, surnamed ‘Choirinos’ (piggish), who had often asked for his writings*

*Why do you growl so much, asking for my words,  
and why do you keep saying: ‘Feed me with your writings’?  
Go away from here: a pig does not eat honey.  
You have acorns, your favourite dinner, if you want.  
If you should need ‘horns’ (carobs) too,  
your wife will provide you with those ‘horns’.* 5

This poetic jibe reveals to us the social dynamics underlying the contemporary circulation of poetry. Just as in Petros’ case, someone had asked for the writings of the poet. The phrase *ἐκ τῶν συγγραμμάτων* is significant, for it implies that Basileios had asked ‘from his writings’, that is, he had not asked once for a specific poem, but perhaps for a selection or a representative poem. Again, Basileios had to turn to the poet in person for such a request. And apparently Christophoros could deny him this privilege. This once more shows

<sup>90</sup> See P. Magdalino, ‘Cultural Change? The Context of Byzantine Poetry from Geometres to Prodromos’, in: Bernard and Demoen (eds), *Poetry and its Contexts*, 19–36, at 34.

that poems initially did not circulate freely or widely. At this stage, the poet controls the circulation of his poems, distributing them to friends as tokens of recognition.

By calling his own poems ‘honey’, using an ancient *topos*, and by comparing this to the acorns a pig eats, Christophoros shows that he is aware that his poems were sought after. They were clearly his own inalienable intellectual creation. They are ‘his writings’ (v. 2: *σαῖς γραφαῖς*), just as Petros had asked for ‘his iambs’.<sup>91</sup> Christophoros’ refusal to give of his poems is part of a peculiar economy that perfectly fits with the elitism that also otherwise marks his dealings with friends. Precisely by keeping the circulation of his poems limited and dependent upon personal requests, Christophoros enhances the value of his poems, both in social terms (they are a rare token of a recognition by a friend) and in aesthetic terms (they are exclusive pieces of work). Invective poems such as this one played a particular role in this context. The intimate friends of Christophoros who had the opportunity to read or hear this poem, and who probably would have heard rumours about Basileios’ wife, have here an occasion to jest at his expense. At the same time, they would again be made conscious of the limited nature of their circle, as, unlike Basileios, they are included amongst Christophoros’ exclusive readership. They form a reading circle governed by laws of intellectual friendship.

### 3.3.1. Scrolls and separate leaves

How should we imagine the material details of the initial circulation of poems among friends? We may recall that Petros had only asked for one poem, which suggests that this poem can only have circulated on a loose scroll, and not in a codex. An important testimony in this regard is a passage from Psellos’ poem 7 about rhetoric, addressed, according to the lemma, to the imperial prince Michael VII Doukas. In a sudden authorial remark in the midst of the various definitions of rhetorical terms, Psellos addresses the imperial student directly (vv. 287–90):

σὺ δ’ ἔχε μοι τὴν σύνοψιν, εἴτ’ ἐρώτα θαρρούντως,  
 κἀγὼ σοι τὴν διάλυσιν λέξω τοῦ ζητουμένου.  
 εἴτ’ οὐ θαυμάζεις, δέσποτα, τοῦ γράφοντος τὴν τέχνην,  
 ἂν ἔχῃς εἰλητάριον βραχὺ τῆς ὅλης τέχνης;

<sup>91</sup> Christophoros 78.2: *ἐμοῖς ἰάμβοις*.

*Keep this summary, please, and do not be afraid to ask questions afterwards:*

*I will give you the solution to your problem.*

*And don't you marvel, my lord, at the skill of the author, now that you have a small scroll of the whole discipline?*<sup>92</sup>

The word *εὐλητάριον* refers to a scroll, that is, a loose parchment folium that is not folded, but rolled up.<sup>93</sup> Here it is explicitly said to be small (*βραχὺν*), containing one single work. So in this case, the circulation of the poem was initiated by handing over to the dedicatee a scroll with the poem separately. This could support the view that the initial circulation took the form of small leaflets distributed amongst a small public.

The occasional depiction of poems as material objects in manuscript images adds further weight to this idea. The frontispiece of the lectionary held at the Princeton Theological Seminary (*Speer Library, cod. acc. 11.21.1900*) (fol. I\*r) displays the donor of the manuscript, Ioannes, bearing the title of *proedros*, standing in front of Christ. Ioannes presents a scroll on which the dedicatory epigram is written.<sup>94</sup> In the epigram, the donor states that he has made the books with much toil, and now dedicates them to Christ. The depiction of the scroll functions as a symbolic substitution for the whole set of books. The fact that it is to be seen on a scroll points to the most obvious form in which Byzantines conceived of a poem being handed over.

Poems addressed to enemies and rivals are also an interesting case. Christophoros 36, for instance, a polemical poem against two men who were friends, gives the impression that their written provocations were continuously exchanged, as 'blows' requiring a 'counterblow'. Christophoros states that he will inflict a lethal blow with his pen (v. 11); his enemy will die at the first throw of his 'spear of words'

<sup>92</sup> J. Walker, 'Michael Psellos on Rhetoric: A Translation and Commentary on Psellos' Synopsis of Hermogenes', *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 31.1 (2001), 5–40, here 21, seems to suppose that the small roll refers to the work of Hermogenes. However, the word group *εἴτ' οὖν* introduces a rhetorical question following the train of thought logically (and is not a temporal adverb), and the small roll is the short overview by Psellos that is placed in antithesis to the 'whole discipline' of Hermogenes.

<sup>93</sup> See B. Atsalos, *La terminologie du livre-manuscrit à l'époque byzantine: termes désignant le livre-manuscrit et l'écriture* (Thessaloniki 1971), 169.

<sup>94</sup> Inc. *Ἰδρότων ἀλίγων Χριστὲ θεέ μου*: G. Vikan, *Illuminated Greek Manuscripts from American Collections* (Princeton 1973), 114 (image), 115 (text). Text also in Spatharakis, *Portrait*, 75.



(vv. 34–9). Likewise, the hostile writings of his opponents are described as arrows fired from a hiding place (v. 19). It would thus seem that poems were sent separately from the one side to the other. Presumably, this again happened in the form of separate leaves or scrolls. But the question that inevitably presents itself is: Would not other people also be interested to read these exchanges? Humour and abuse, as we have also supposed in the case of Basileios Choirinos, can only have had effect when they would be read by people who knew the abused personally, and we can infer the same for poem 36.

Mauropus 55 is an excellent source for information about the medium in which poetry circulated initially.<sup>95</sup> The courtier Mauropus presents here a poem to the two empresses: that is, to Zoe, married to the emperor Konstantinos IX Monomachos, and her sister Theodora. It is a very deferential encomium, exalting the power of the imperial family. The poem, as printed in the modern edition, begins with these two verses:

*Δισσαῖς ἀνάσσαις ἀπταδέλφαις Ἀγούσταις  
δώρημα κοινὸν ἐξ ἑνὸς δούλου τόδε.*

*To the two sisters, Augustae and mistresses,  
This shared gift from one servant.*

In the manuscript *Vat. gr.* 676, these lines clearly stand out from the rest of the poem (see Figure 3.6). A larger initial at the beginning of verse 3 indicates that the poem proper starts only at this point. Moreover, these two verses are not written in minuscule letters like the main body of the text, but in a majuscule script type. As we have seen above, the use of this script marks these two lines out as a paratext, a poem subsidiary to the text next to which it is written. Consequently, these two initial verses are in fact a separate poem—let us call it 55a—that presents the poem proper (55b) as a gift. The use of a majuscule script for 55a must be a vestige of its function as a ‘real’ inscription—that is, an inscription on a material object. If this is correct, we may imagine that poem 55b was handed over to the empresses in the form of a small scroll, with 55a as an elegant corollary attached to it in some way or other.

<sup>95</sup> See also F. Bernard, ‘The Circulation of Poetry in 11th-century Byzantium’, in: S. Neocleous (ed.), *Papers from the First and Second Postgraduate Forums in Byzantine Studies: Sailing to Byzantium* (Newcastle upon Tyne 2009), 145–60.

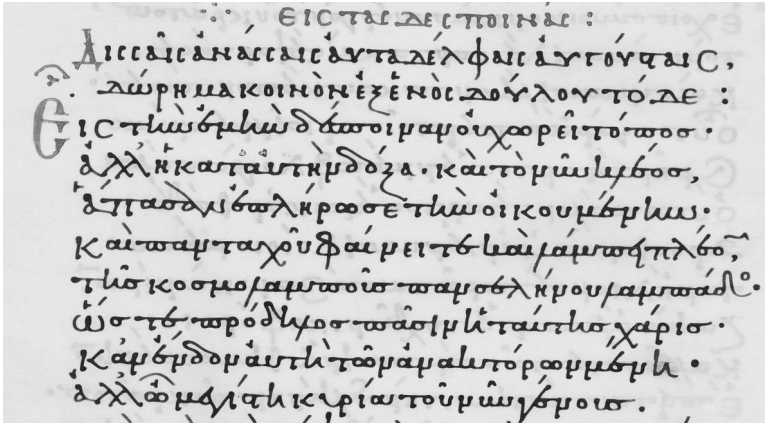


Figure 3.6 Vat. gr. 676, fol. 26v: Maupous 55, with an introductory epigram. © 2013 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

Poem 55b itself first addresses the ‘mistress’ of the poet. This mistress is to be identified with Theodora, because there is a change of addressee at line 10. From this point on, Maupous speaks to Zoe, for her name is alluded to in line 21 (*ζωή τε τοῦ σύμπαντος εὐτυχεστάτη*). The change of addressee is in itself revealing (vv. 10–12):

*ἀλλ' ὦ μείγιστη κυρία τοῦ νῦν γένους*  
*(πρὸς γὰρ σέ τρέψω τὸν βραχὺν τοῦτον λόγον,*  
*κὰν μὴ βλέπειν ἔχω σε, πῶς δέχη τάδε),*

*But oh, you greatest mistress of the present generation,*  
*(for now I address in turn this short poem to you,*  
*even if I cannot see how you will receive this) . . .*

In other words, Maupous explodes the fiction of an oral address: even though he purports to ‘turn himself’ now to Zoe, this is no real change of direction, for he does not see Zoe at the moment of reading. Maupous thus implicitly hints at the fact that this poem is sent from afar and destined to be read in his absence. Even though the remainder of the poem reads like an oral address, both manuscript evidence and this small metadiscursive reference prove it is not.

Of course, the scroll is a format for reading that we are not inclined to imagine because scrolls were more vulnerable to loss than codices, but it must have been the most widespread form in which poems initially circulated. Only at a later stage were these separate leaves or

scrolls joined together. Psellos has left us some clues capable of providing an impression of this process. The most instructive is a fragment from a short treatise *Περὶ καινῶν δογμάτων καὶ ὄρων τῶν νομικῶν ῥωμαϊστὶ λεγομένων λέξεων*. Near the end of this work, Psellos tells the addressee that most of what he has written exists also in the form of drafts (*σχέδια*), which were still to be found on scrolls (*εἰληταρίοις*). Many people selected texts from these loose leaves (*διφθέραι*), made little volumes of them, and this way had ‘books’ of Psellos’ writings.<sup>96</sup> A similar procedure is observable for Psellos’ letters.<sup>97</sup> Psellos implies in several letters to Ioannes Doukas that the *caesar* made books of his letters.<sup>98</sup> A pattern can be discerned here: small texts were first circulated on separate scrolls, then were collected into small copybooks or cahiers, which were sometimes collected into a larger book. In general, it can be said that the one-leaf parchment format brings the circulation of poems closer to that of letters: small scale, informal, and fugitive, although never fully private, since knowledge of their existence quickly spread among a small community of people.

### 3.3.2. Reading circles

These examples show that the circulation of poetry was motivated and instigated by the habits of intellectual friendship. The social circles in which readings took place are a vital element for understanding readership of poetry. Reading functioned as an element of mutual recognition of social groups in Byzantine society. The examples of reading in the case of Petros and non-reading in the case of Basileios Choirinos allow us to imagine the initial circulation of poems as a chain of lending and borrowing of separate scrolls

<sup>96</sup> Michael Psellos, *De operatione daemonum*, ed. J.-F. Boissonade (Nuremberg 1838), p. 116: *δελτάρια τὰς διφθέρας ποιούντες, εὐθὺς ἔχουσι βιβλία τὰ γεγραμμένα*. See Atsalos, *Terminologie du livre-manuscrit*, 168–9; W. Wolska-Conus, ‘L’école de droit et l’enseignement du droit à Byzance au XIe siècle: Xiphilin et Psellos’, *TM* 7 (1979), 1–107, here 65–6.

<sup>97</sup> S. Papaioannou, ‘Fragile Literature: Byzantine Letter-collections and the Case of Michael Psellos’, in: P. Odorico (ed.), *La face cachée de la littérature byzantine. Le texte en tant que message immédiat* (Paris 2012), 289–328, here 301–3.

<sup>98</sup> P. Gautier, ‘Quelques lettres de Psellos inédites ou déjà éditées’, *REB* 44 (1986), 111–97, nr. 4, p. 132, l. 7: *σὺ μὲν τὰς ἐμὰς ἐπιστολάς βιβλία ποιεῖς*; see also next footnote.

amongst a limited circle of peers. Members of these inner circles seem to have been personal acquaintances of the poet.

Receiving a poem can thus be seen as a form of privilege, precisely because the normal way to obtain a poem was through a personal request to the poet. Conversely, it was also an honour for the author if an influential friend was interested in his works and kept copies of his letters and other works. Michael Psellos points to this in a letter to the *caesar* Doukas, where Psellos says of his friend that he ‘attached great importance to my letters and stored my writings in his books’.<sup>99</sup> This is seen by Psellos as a token of friendship.

Christophoros himself also sends requests to others, asking to read their works, and framing this in the context of an intellectual friendship. He addresses such requests mainly to Niketas Synadenos. We have already remarked that Christophoros portrays him as an ideal and complete intellectual in poem 27. This portrait concludes with a request to read the works of his hero. Reading some of Niketas’ *logoi* will give him ineffable pleasure: Christophoros will feel like a new Sardanapalos, enjoying the luxurious pleasure of Niketas’ words.<sup>100</sup> But the request for words is also described as a service between friends: Christophoros asks his hero to ‘genuinely pronounce words that may be few, but dear to me’ (vv. 44–5).<sup>101</sup> The addition ‘genuinely’ (*γνησίως*), referring to the honest feelings with which Niketas should give the words, indicates that the communication of these ‘words’ is not a mere aesthetic pleasure, but the confirmation of a friendship.

In poem 100, Christophoros urges Niketas to send him some more words, in a fashion typical of epistolography. He professes the ideals of intellectual friendship, stating that *logoi* are the food on which he survives. If Niketas keeps silent, he will starve ‘his friend’ (v. 7: τὸν σὸν φίλον). Again, friendship is connected to the circulation of texts. Poem 115 is an even starker declaration of this. Christophoros is here mockingly irritated by a gift of biscuits from his friend Nikephoros: he would rather receive some words.<sup>102</sup> This attachment can

<sup>99</sup> Psellos, *Ep. K-D* 256, p. 303, l. 19–20: τὰς ἐπιστολάς περὶ πλείονος ἐτίθει σπουδῆς καὶ συγγράμματα ἐν βιβλίοις ἀπεθησαύριζε.

<sup>100</sup> Christophoros 27.53: ζῶσαν τρυφὴν δὲ σοὺς σοφοῦς τρυφῶν λόγους.

<sup>101</sup> Christophoros 27.44–45: ἀλλὰ καὶ σὺ γνησίως/φθέγγαι βραχὺν μὲν ἀλλ’ ἐμοὶ φίλον λόγον.

<sup>102</sup> See below, 330–3.

also be observed in poem 142. It appears from the fragmented lines of this poem that Christophoros, suffering from a disease of the eyes, requests a certain Niketas *prothospatharios*, to read aloud some texts. He asserts that he is ‘against his will deprived of his reading’, and asks Niketas to enlighten him with words. Sickness serves here as a foil against which Christophoros once more highlights his desire for *hoi logoi*. In sum, these poems celebrate a friendship defined by reading practices, such as the lending and borrowing of texts. The parallel with similar ethics in letter writing is easy to draw: friendship is expressed and maintained through the commitment to send and receive words. Moreover, these examples of Christophoros show that poems could adopt the content (and the modes of circulation) of letters.

The term ‘reading circle’ can be applied aptly to these gatherings governed by the ethics of friendship, in which collective reading enhances the bonds between intellectual friends.<sup>103</sup> Reading (and circulating) works is defined as a shared love that unites intellectual friends. This leads to the conclusion that the contemporary audience for Byzantine poems was small, and was even deliberately kept small. This exclusivity is the essence of the intellectual *philia* that is so important for the social cohesion of the groups we are examining.

The term *theatron* sometimes occurs in letters to refer to reading circles, but it is by no means the dominant term, and nowhere does it point to a concrete well defined space or circle.<sup>104</sup> Mostly it implies a competitive aspect. In a letter to a friend, Psellos depicts a ‘panhellenic theatre’ in which the friends show their letters to each other, and read and write them in exchange: ‘So, let us meet each other, as in a panhellenic theatre, and showing in turn our letters, reading them in exchange, and vying for honour.’<sup>105</sup> The term *theatron* and the final verb, ‘vying for honour’ (*ἀντιφιλοτιμείν*), hint here at a friendly competitive aspect. In another letter, he says that he ‘fills every ear, the learned folks and the uneducated, the *theatra* and the feasts’ with

<sup>103</sup> G. Cavallo, ‘Tracce per una storia della lettura a Bisanzio’, *BZ* 95 (2002), 423–44, at 429–32, and Cavallo, *Lire*, 77–9.

<sup>104</sup> I hope to explore this in a study on authorial practices in Michael Psellos.

<sup>105</sup> Psellos, *Ep. K-D* 223, p. 265, l. 23–5: *πρόσιμεν οὖν ἀλλήλοις ὥσπερ ἐν πανελληνίῳ θεάτρῳ τὰς σὰς ἀντεπιδεικνύντες ἐπιστολάς καὶ ἀντεπέξιμεν ταύτας καὶ ἀντιφιλοτιμούμεθα.*

praises for his correspondent.<sup>106</sup> Equally often, we find the term *syllogos* to refer to gatherings of learned people in Constantinople that provided occasions for rhetorical performance. What the term *theatron* and related imagery make clear, however, is that reading circles, although governed by laws of friendship, often included a competitive aspect. As we have seen in the readings of Christophoros 77 and Mauropous 32, attack and defence are the backbone of the mutual readings in such reading circles. Performing poems (or improvising them?) for a gathered group of learned people may be part of the ‘testing grounds’ for candidates, such as we will describe them in Chapter 5.

No poem brings the reality of collective performance, and the sense of delight in reading poetry, closer to our ears and eyes than the first poem of Anon. Sola. This poem describes a boat trip taken by a few friends along the Bosphorus. In the tradition of *ekphraseis* of a *locus amoenus*, the poet describes how the company delights in the pleasant evening breeze, the gentle splashing of the waves, the dolphins dancing in the sea, and many cups of wine. Meanwhile, they indulge in the collective recitation (and/or singing?) of poetry.

As becomes clear from the first verses, the poem is addressed to others who were not present on the trip:

Ὅπου λόγος πρόεδρος ὁ πρωτοθρόνος  
ἀκούσατε φθονοῦντες, ὡς ῥαγῆτέ μοι,  
οὔαν τρυφήν τρυφῶμεν οἱ καλοὶ φίλοι.

*There where logos is president and holds the place of honour,  
listen to me with envy, so that you may burst,  
what pleasure the fine friends enjoyed.*

I take *πρωτοθρόνος* to be metaphorical, not as an indication of the office of metropolitan, as Sola thinks.<sup>107</sup> The poet addresses his poem to all people who hold *logos* in honour. In this way, he restricts his audience to the intellectual elite, as they would appreciate (and indeed, would envy) the fine enjoyments of the poet and his friends. These friends themselves are called the ‘fine friends’ (v. 2), ‘friends of the Muses’ (v. 29, in harmony with the dolphins surrounding them),

<sup>106</sup> Psellos, *Ep. Sathas* 182, p. 464, l. 24–6: πληρῶ πάντων ἀκοήν, ἐλλόγιμόν τε δῆμον καὶ ἄσοφον, θεατρά τε καὶ πανηγύρεις τῶν σῶν ἐγκωμίων.

<sup>107</sup> Sola, ‘Giambografi’, 18–19 (writing the word with an initial capital in his edition on p. 20).

and ‘eurhythmic friends’ (v. 38). The devotion to intellectual pleasures goes hand in hand with the social coherence of the group. Moreover, the construction using the cognate object, *τρυφήν τρυφάω*, to describe these luxurious pleasures (v. 3), reminds us of how Christophoros described the intellectual pleasure shared by him and Niketas.<sup>108</sup> The words conjure up an image of exclusive luxury, but one reserved only for fine friends. The poem is the celebration of the common interests that unite a group of friends.

The reading in which the friends delight is described as follows (vv. 34–9):

*Τί ταῦτα πάντα; ποῖος ἀρκέσει λόγος  
φράζων τὰ τερπνὰ τῶν λόγων ἡμῶν ἄνθη  
κρότους ἰάμβων, τῶν ἐπῶν εὐρυθμίας  
μέτρα τραγωδῶν, ῥητόρων λογογράφων  
(Μουσῶν χοροὺς εἰκασας εὐρύθμους φίλους)  
πληροῦντα πάντα τῶν καλῶν ὀρχημάτων;* 35

*What is all this? What words will suffice  
to express the delightful flowers of our words,  
the beats of iambs, the rhythms of hexameters,  
the metres of tragedians and clausulae of prose orators—  
you would have likened the rhythmic friends to choirs of the Muses—  
that fill everything with beautiful dances?* 35

The word ‘flowers’ (v. 35: *ἄνθη*) may suggest that the literature recited here was presented in the form of anthologies and selections. We can infer that the friends had each made a personal selection of various literary works and entertained each other with them, perhaps gaining admiration by the originality of their selection, and/or the amount of erudition displayed. It is hard to imagine that in such a context they would not have added some poetry of their own—this member of the club, at least, wrote himself a poetic reflection on the event.<sup>109</sup> As Magdalino suggests, during these gatherings the members of such circles may, in the process of reciting and hearing, have improvised verses in turn.

The flowers of *logoi* consist of several genres. Both poetry and prose are expressly mentioned. The fact that tragedians are also read makes

<sup>108</sup> Christophoros 27.53: *ζῶσαν τρυφήν δὲ σοῦς σοφοῦς τρυφῶν λόγους.*

<sup>109</sup> Magdalino, ‘Cultural Change?’, 31 and 34–5.

it clear that ancient poetry was intended, because there are no Byzantine tragedians. The acoustic aspect of poetry comes very much alive in this fragment. The frequent references to rhythm (see also above, 45–6) indicate that there was a strong sensitivity to acoustic features. The phrase *κρότοι τῶν ἰάμβων* (beats of iambs), referring to the accentual rhythm of dodecasyllables (v. 36), focuses on the rhythmical qualities of poetry.<sup>110</sup> We also see rhythm in the ‘dances’ by which everything is said to have been filled (v. 39), and the qualification ‘eurhythmic’ for our culture-loving friends (v. 38). The poem is in essence a picture of an intellectual savouring of poetry, attentive to the euphonic and rhythmical qualities of texts (both poetry and prose, as we have seen). The wide range of literary genres the friends are said to read, from tragedies to orators, suggests that the readings performed here are to be compared to anthologies in the true sense of the word.

### 3.4. PERFORMANCE OF POETRY

The title of this chapter, ‘Reading’, is slightly misleading, as it appears to refer only to a silent and individual perception of written texts. But oral performance was also an important mode of having contact with poetry. Performance of literature begins to become more and more the focus of research,<sup>111</sup> and it is worthwhile to take into account the oral background of our poetry.

#### 3.4.1. Acoustic aspects of poetry

The poem of Anon. Sola, as we have seen, is the most poignant and enchanting poetic description of a collective performance of poetry. But in that respect, it stands alone among contemporary texts. How oral is Byzantine learned poetry, then? Most scholars today would accept that much Byzantine poetry, including learned poetry, was meant to be orally recited or performed. However, firm evidence is

<sup>110</sup> For the application of *κρότος* to rhythm in dodecasyllables, see Lauxtermann, ‘Velocity’, 24.

<sup>111</sup> M. Mullett, ‘Rhetoric, Theory, and the Imperative of Performance: Byzantium and Now’, in: E. Jeffreys (ed.) *Rhetoric in Byzantium* (Aldershot 2003), 151–70; Cavallo, ‘Tracce’; id., *Lire*, 47–55.



almost entirely lacking, and all we can do is point to some parameters that heighten the probability of performance.<sup>112</sup>

One possible approach to exploring the performative aspect of poetry is to reveal certain internal stylistic and/or rhetorical features within the text that suggest an oral performance. This is the approach followed by Panagiotis Agapitos in his analysis of Psellos 17, the lengthy poem written on the occasion of the death of the *sebaste* Maria Skleraina, mistress of Konstantinos IX Monomachos.<sup>113</sup> Agapitos observed that the rhetorical structure of the poem resembles that of (non-poetic) public funeral orations. He also pointed out the many metrical and stylistic devices that create a musical or euphonic effect. Psellos makes abundant use of rhyme (or, more precisely, *homoioleuton*), parallel grammatical and accentual structures (*isokola*), anaphoras, etc. These devices can only have been appreciated acoustically, making the poem particularly apt for oral delivery.<sup>114</sup> The vividness is further enhanced by *ethopoiiai*, in which Psellos gave voice to family members of the deceased, thus channelling their emotions and creating a direct engagement with the audience of relatives who would have been present at the funeral (or the commemoration service). The poem, hence, is a poetic speech designed for public performance.

Agapitos' arguments are very convincing for this specific poem, but the question remains whether we can apply his conclusions to other poems of the period. If we restrict ourselves for the moment to funeral poems, it is my impression that the kind of analysis applied by Agapitos to Psellos 17 will not yield the same rich results when applied to the funeral poems of Christophoros and Mauropous (Christophoros 44, 57, 77, for family members; Mauropous 35 to 39, for friends). These poems, while not void of acoustic effects (as any poem of this period), do not exhibit the same musicality as Psellos' poem. There is also another significant difference: neither Christophoros' nor Mauropous' funeral pieces were public in the sense that Psellos' lament for Skleraina was public. Mauropous' poems are written in his own name and from his own perspective (see 35.15: *φώτιζε τὸν σόν, Μιχαήλ, Ἰωάννην*, 37.45: *δμώνυμός σοι τήνδε τήν μονωδία*). The same applies to Christophoros (mentioning

<sup>112</sup> See Hörandner, 'Zur kommunikativen Funktion', 423.

<sup>113</sup> P. Agapitos, 'Public and Private Death in Psellos', *BZ* 101 (2008), 555–607.

<sup>114</sup> Agapitos, 'Death', 563–8.

his name in 57.8, for instance). This suggests a more intimate occasion and not a public service, as in the case of Psellos 17.

It should be noted in passing that some funeral poems of Mauropous (40, 41, 81) are grave epigrams, not funeral orations; as such they are (or imitate) inscriptions, not oral recitations. They are entitled *εἰς τὸν τάφον*; moreover, poem 40 in particular employs conventional techniques of grave epigrams, such as the address to the passer-by.

This does not detract from the undeniable fact that many poems clearly strive to be acoustically pleasing. Luca Sarriu has pointed to some rhythmical and rhetorical features in Psellos' poems that seem to favour a vocal recitation.<sup>115</sup> As we have seen, many testimonies emphasized the musical qualities of poetry (see above, 44–7). Further on in this chapter, I will attempt to demonstrate these qualities in another poem of Psellos, poem 19. At this point, I want to draw attention to Christophoros' poem 54, a short praise poem for Konstantinos Monomachos. This example eminently exhibits the kind of euphony that was likely intended by the Byzantines when they praised qualities as harmony, melody, and rhythm.

*Ἔχεις τὸ λευκόν· εἰς τί μαργάρων χάρις;  
τὸ ξανθὸν ἀρχεῖς· χρυσὸς ὄντως εἰς μάτην.  
πλουτεῖς τὸ φαιδρόν· οἱ λίθοι βάρους μόνον.  
κόσμον φέρεις σόν· ἐρρέτω κόσμος νόθος.*

*You possess brightness—why then the beauty of pearls?  
You can boast blond—gold is truly of no use.  
You are rich in splendour—stones are weight only.  
You have your own ornaments—away with those false beauties!*

Each verse forms an antithesis between Monomachos' beautiful bodily features and the artificial beauty of jewellery. The distribution of dynamic accents in the verses creates a rhythmical pattern: in each verse, the two realms of beauty are separated by the same caesura (after the fifth syllable), with a stress on the fifth syllable, while the

<sup>115</sup> L. Sarriu, 'Metrica e stile nei dodecasillabi di Michele Psello', *Quaderni del Dipartimento di Filologia, Linguistica e Tradizione classica "Augusto Rostagni" dell'Università degli Studi di Torino* 2 (2003), 293–306; and L. Sarriu, 'Ritmo, metro, poesia e stile. Alcune considerazioni sul dodecasillabo di Michele Psello', *Medioevo greco* 6 (2006), 171–97. Not all of these observations are equally convincing: the rhythmical and metrical patterns Sarriu sees in Psellos 9 (Sarriu, 'Ritmo, metro', 188–91), for example, are in my view simply the accidental result of the particular didactic outlook of the poem, explaining difficult terms that would necessarily come mostly at the beginning of a verse.

verse, as is usual, ends with an accent on the eleventh syllable. The opposition between a final stress in the first half verse and a penultimate stress in the second highlights the antithesis and creates an internal rhythmical variation that is, for example, also present in the *politikos stichos*. Apart from the rhythmical structuring, the pattern of sounds is also well thought out. Each first half verse, except for the second, ends on the sound /-on/, which thus resonates through the whole poem. The endings of each verse are paired by assonance: the first two verses end on the vowels /a/ and /i/, while the last two end on /o/ and /o/. These devices lend the poem a particular musicality that would only be appreciated when the poem was performed.

But there are other ways to learn something more about the acoustic dimensions of Byzantine poetry. The visual representation of poems in manuscripts is one of them. As we have seen above,<sup>116</sup> punctuation in many manuscripts pays special attention to the rhythmical structure of poems, especially by indicating verse pauses. Such a visual representation helps the reader to execute a performance of the poem based on the rhythmical *cola*. The graphic image of the poems is in these cases influenced by the performed dimension of the poem.

Another way to understand performance is to see how poems refer to their own audience and modes of reading. It would seem—but further examination would have to be done to clarify this—that Byzantine authors, when discussing matters of style or rhetorical structure, primarily highlight the effect of these features on *listeners* to the text, not on readers. To take but one simple example: Mauropous explains the functioning of the particle *δέ* as something that steers the mind of the listener (*ἀκούσαντος*), not the reader.<sup>117</sup>

References to reading poetry are often phrased as ‘hearing’ poetry. Thus, in the lemma above Psellos 22, which identifies this poem as a reaction of Psellos on a poem of Iakobos, it is said that Psellos had ‘heard’ (*ἀκούσας*) Iakobos’ poem, and then made his own poem.<sup>118</sup> In his didactic poem on the Song of Songs (poem 2), Psellos repeatedly suggests to his addressee (the imperial pupil) that they listen to the words that the personages say in the Song. The verb *ἀκούω* is here used extensively to mark such a transition in the text. This may form part of the classroom setting that Psellos wants to achieve in this poem (see below, 241–3).

<sup>116</sup> See above, 75–84.

<sup>117</sup> Mauropous, *Ep.* 17.45.

<sup>118</sup> For an extensive discussion of this poem and its background, see below, 280–5.

For this and for other poems, it may be advisable to maintain a distinction between the original historical setting of the poem and the reading context inscribed in the poem.<sup>119</sup> For instance, when Christophoros addresses a pretentious *idiotes*, and urges him to 'listen' (40.54: ἄκουε) to his words, this pertains to an addressee 'within the text'. It is hard to believe that this person would be physically present at an oral delivery of the poem. There is a divergence between the audience such as the poem purports to have been written for, and the audience that the text seems to have in mind; in other words, between the explicit and the implicit reader.<sup>120</sup> The same remark may be made for the following verse, with which Mauropous opens an epigram on an image of the Resurrection of Lazarus: 'What a mind is in this painting! But you, hear and look!'<sup>121</sup> Here, the verb 'to look' pertains to the 'viewing' of the image by the anonymous passer-by, and the verb 'to hear' refers to these very words, which the speaking instance (the 'narrator') addresses to this passer-by. But, as I hope to show in the next section, we should be careful not to confuse this text-immanent addressee with the actual public of the poem. Hence, the anticipated reactions of the inscribed reader do not necessarily correspond with those of the historical public that in the eleventh century came into contact with the poems of Mauropous.

Improvisation is a special mode of poetic performance that deserves our attention.<sup>122</sup> Improvisation is notably often connected with verse.<sup>123</sup> Authors often prided themselves on their ability to improvise on the spot. Psellos says that one of his students admired him for his improvised speeches.<sup>124</sup> Several of Psellos' writings are expressly identified as improvisations.<sup>125</sup> Mocking epigrams, for example, with their puns and wit at the expense of others, may have involved an aspect of improvisation.

For the question of the performance and improvisation, metre is an important aspect to consider. But metre works in two directions (if we restrict ourselves to dodecasyllables for the moment). On the one hand, the fixed rhythmical pattern of the metre would help to give

<sup>119</sup> See the next section. <sup>120</sup> Wilson, 'Readers in Texts'.

<sup>121</sup> Mauropous 5.1 'Ὁ τῆς γραφῆς νοῦς· ἀλλ' ἄκουε καὶ βλέπε.

<sup>122</sup> See also Cavallo, *Lire*, 61–2. <sup>123</sup> Magdalino, 'Cultural Change?', 31–5.

<sup>124</sup> Michael Psellos, *Scripta Minora*, ed. E. Kurtz and F. Drexler, vol. I (Milan 1936), p. 213, l. 18–21.

<sup>125</sup> E.g. at the end of Michael Psellos, *Theologica*, ed. P. Gautier, vol. 1 (Leipzig 1989), 23.139–45.

structure to the improvisation. And, as noted on several occasions, this accentual pattern is an important ingredient of the perceived melodiousness of verse. On the other hand, there is the prosodic structure of Byzantine dodecasyllables, that learned fossil from which our poets could never fully depart. It is impossible to believe that anybody could recite prosodically correct verses off the cuff, since the different length of vowels in Greek could no longer be heard. If performed, this aspect was undoubtedly lost on the audience.

### 3.4.2. Poetry to be sung

There is a curious category of poems in which the question of oral performance imposes itself with more urgency, because they are composed in hymnographic metres, such as are used in Byzantine liturgy; and Byzantine liturgical poetry was, of course, intended to be performed.<sup>126</sup> Just like other hymnographic poetry, they can be sung to one of the *heirmoi*, which are indicated above the poem. But at the same time, the content of these poems is manifestly non-liturgical. This category has been studied in detail by Mitsakis, who coined the term ‘parahymnography’ to label this group of poems.<sup>127</sup> The calendars of Christophoros in stichera and canones fall into this group, as well as Psellos 22, a satire written in the form of a canon. The ‘orthographical canones’ of Niketas of Herakleia are also poems that use liturgical forms without any liturgical content.

There is debate among scholars about the purpose of the hymnographic form. Some contend that these poems are parodies of hymnographic models, with a possible malignant tone, ridiculing church and liturgy. Mitsakis, however, pointed out that the melodies of hymnography were part and parcel of the cultural legacy of any Byzantine.<sup>128</sup> As Mitsakis has shown, songs based on hymnographic models were composed and sung long after the fall of Constantinople,

<sup>126</sup> Hörandner, ‘Zur kommunikativen Funktion’, 423–4.

<sup>127</sup> K. Mitsakis, ‘Byzantine and Modern Greek Parahymnography’, *Studies in Eastern Chant* 5 (1990), 9–76.

<sup>128</sup> Mitsakis, ‘Parahymnography’, 20–1; Mitsakis’ conclusions are generally endorsed by F. D’Aiuto, ‘L’innografia’, in: G. Cavallo (ed.), *Lo spazio letterario del medioevo* 3. *Le culture circostanti* Vol. 1: *La cultura bizantina* (Rome 2004), 257–300, here 293–4.

without any trace of malignant parody. In the Byzantine cultural sphere, they may have continued as a non-literary stratum, next to so many other forms of oral poetry that enjoyed popularity without leaving many traces in the written, intellectual literary tradition.<sup>129</sup>

It may be useful to discuss these poems case by case. The calendars of Christophoros are generally seen as lifeless exercises. Darrouzès was quite categorical: these poems remained 'sans emploi liturgique',<sup>130</sup> for the simple reason that, since these calendars included several saints within one canon, there was no precise day in the liturgical offices when these canons could be sung. This view was also adopted by Follieri, the editor of the calendars.<sup>131</sup> However, this is contradicted by the evidence present in one of the oldest manuscripts containing the calendars, *Lesb. Leimon*. 295 (late twelfth century), which originated in Constantinople. The notices preceding the *stichera* and *canones* clearly point to a practical liturgical use of the calendars. The title above the *stichera* specifies: '[the stichera] that have to be sung during the whole month'. Above the *canones* of the first three months, we read in each case: 'Canon sung during the whole month.'<sup>132</sup> Moreover, the manuscripts containing the calendars are often *Horologia*: that is, books intended for liturgical use. Darrouzès' objections can be easily set aside if we consider that these texts could be sung repeatedly during the whole month.

This is in contrast to Christophoros' calendars in iambs and hexameters, which are mostly transmitted in manuscripts with miscellaneous content. Also internally, one may note that the references to 'singing', often addressed to an entire community, are far more frequent in the hymnographic calendars than in the calendars in classicizing metres (although they are not absent there). Therefore I cannot see any objection to the idea that the calendars in *canones* and *stichera* were primarily intended to be sung; in other words, that they employ models taken from hymnographic *heirmoi* as a device to allow for practical use. As a result, the calendars in *stichera* and *canones* may be hymnography rather than parahymnography.

<sup>129</sup> For the concept of the non-literary strata, see M. Jeffreys, 'Byzantine Metrics: Nonliterary Strata', *JÖB* 31.1 (1981), 313–34.

<sup>130</sup> J. Darrouzès, 'Les calendriers byzantins en vers', *REB* 16 (1958), 59–84, esp. 66.

<sup>131</sup> E. Follieri, *I calendari in metro innografico di Cristoforo Mitileneo* (Brussels 1980), I, 26–7.

<sup>132</sup> Greek text of these titles in: Follieri, *Calendari*, I, 27. Follieri considers the Lesbos manuscripts as an isolated initiative.

In the case of Niketas' orthographical canons, the liturgical form may have had particular use in a classroom context. It would be easier to remember a lesson that could be sung, and this would heighten the attractiveness of the dry subject matter. Collective oral performance would enable the pupils to become involved with the subject at hand.

The case of Psellos' poem 22 is more difficult. This poem is a virulent attack against the monk Iakobos, taking issue with his drinking habits. The acrostic reads 'I, Konstas, sing (ᾄδω) here in beautiful rhythms of bibulous Iakobos.'<sup>133</sup> Scholars have seen the poem as scurrilous abuse of solemn church metres.<sup>134</sup> Psellos may indeed have drawn attention to the extraordinary form he was using. He frequently includes the word *κανών*, referring to the monastic 'rule' that Iakobos broke by drinking excessively, but also connoting the metrical form of his own poem. The word and its derivatives (such as *κανονικῶς*) occur five times (vv. 25, 39, 97, 119, 149) in 160 verses. As Eideneier has remarked, Psellos also alluded at the beginning of his strophes to the original liturgical strophes.<sup>135</sup>

On the other hand, Psellos did not nurture a disdain for such forms, if that were even possible in the Byzantine mindset. He also composed a 'serious' canon for Symeon Metaphrastes (poem 23). Later Byzantines were not reluctant to connect Psellos with liturgical efforts: some manuscripts assume that he is to be identified with the 'Michael the Monk' who composed canons for all the saints of the year (see e.g. *Berol. Hamilton* 119, thirteenth century).<sup>136</sup> The hymnographic metre facilitated the kind of collective performance we pictured earlier as the setting for other polemical poems: a group of friends joining in a spiteful song (of which they all knew the melody) at the expense of someone they would have known personally.

### 3.4.3. Ceremonial poetry

Court ceremonial is another likely context for the oral performance of poetry. From earlier centuries, we have poetic ceremonial texts that

<sup>133</sup> Konstas was Psellos' secular name. <sup>134</sup> See Westerink, *Poemata*, 270.

<sup>135</sup> H. Eideneier, *Spanos. Eine byzantinische Satire in der Form einer Parodie* (Berlin/New York 1977), 52–5 (where also some examples of earlier scholars who saw an anticlerical stance in Psellos' parody).

<sup>136</sup> Follieri, *Calendari*, I, 21 and 277.

were clearly designed to be sung, such as the songs of the demes.<sup>137</sup> The same applies to the twelfth century, where there is an abundance of poetic texts that have a clear link to imperial ceremony.<sup>138</sup> But for the eleventh century we do not have court poetry properly speaking,<sup>139</sup> nor do we have many indications concerning imperial ceremony. However, some poems do seem closely connected to court rituals.

One of them is Christophoros' poem 24, entitled 'On the procession (*προέλευσις*) of Michael IV'. The emperor is said to come out of the palace and show himself to the whole city. The people experience an ineffable joy at this sight. Is this short poem (six verses) a precursor to the twelfth-century poems for the imperial ceremony of *prokypsis*? The situation described in this poem seems in any case very similar.

Another poem connected to an oral performance at court is Psellos 18, which was pronounced in the presence of Isaakios Komnenos and dealt with the subject of the *kalandai*. The poem itself refers to a setting where the populace addresses the emperor with songs and poems (see below, 301–5). Psellos 19, likewise, is a solemn address to the emperor Isaakios Komnenos. This poem debunks some people who had predicted Isaakios' death in the month of August. In this poem, many rhetorical, stylistic, and metrical devices are present that would be particularly appreciated in an oral recitation. There is the frequent use of anaphora, especially in rhetorical questions (or answers to them) (vv. 19–22; 29–31; 52–8; 97–9). There are also effects of *homoioteleuton* (or rhyme; vv. 64–7), other acoustic echoes (8–9: *χρησμός*—*Χριστός*), and parallel structures in two successive verses (*isokola*, as they would be called in rhetorical theory: see vv. 19–20; 37–8). Some passages clearly remind us of court songs from earlier and later centuries, such as this address with the repetitive *χαίρε* and a reference to the coming and going of the month of August, having the same name as the imperial title 'Augustus' (vv. 97–100):

*Αὔγουστε, χαίρε. χαίρε, τεθρυλλημένε,  
Αὔγουστε παμβόητε, κλήσις ἡρμένη.  
Αὔγουστε, χαίρε· χαίρέ μοι καὶ πολλάκις  
καὶ πολλάκις πρόσελθε καὶ πάλιν τρέχε.*

<sup>137</sup> See the assembled texts in Lauxtermann, *Spring of Rhythm*.

<sup>138</sup> Hörandner, 'Court Poetry'; see also M. Jeffreys, "Rhetorical" texts', in: E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Rhetoric in Byzantium* (Aldershot 2003), 87–100, where at pp. 90–1 the question is asked whether references to a performative context are reflections of reality or clever re-enactments.

<sup>139</sup> Hörandner, 'Poésie profane', 253–4; Hörandner, 'Court Poetry', 78.



*Hail thee, Augustus! Hail thee, famous one,  
celebrated Augustus—a lofty address.  
Hail thee, Augustus! Hail thee many times;  
come many times here, and disappear again!*

It seems very unlikely that texts such as this would have remained silent on paper, where these effects would inevitably be lost. But the question is not just whether these texts were intended for oral performance or not (a question that is bound to remain speculative), but also whether a Byzantine reader encountering these poems on a scroll or in a codex (which remain the most obvious formats of reading) would have approached them as the written remains of a particular occasion, or as texts belonging primarily to a ‘world on paper’, a world, that is, detached from the tangible, audible reality around the reader.

### 3.5. REAL WORLD OR WORLD ON PAPER?

There is a growing consensus in recent scholarship that most Byzantine poems (and especially epigrams) as found in books were to a certain extent utilitarian; that is, that these texts were once used in a real-life setting where they served a concrete social occasion (a *Sitz im Leben*).<sup>140</sup> In the case of epigrams, this stage is testified to by the many inscriptions that have survived, of which some are also transmitted in the manuscript tradition. However, there are only very few ‘matches’ across the whole history of the Byzantine epigram: that is, epigrams preserved both in situ and in manuscripts.<sup>141</sup> For most of the poems we know, we have to reconstruct for ourselves the original circumstances of the poem. This applies not only to epigrams, but also to poems evoking an original oral setting.<sup>142</sup>

<sup>140</sup> Hörandner, ‘Zur kommunikativen Funktion’, 419–21; Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, passim. See also A. Garzya, ‘Testi letterari d’uso strumentale’, *JÖB* 31.1 (1981), 263–87 (who primarily investigates texts used as documents), and P. Volpe Cacciatore, ‘L’epigramma come testo letterario d’uso strumentale’, *JÖB* 32.3 (1982), 11–19.

<sup>141</sup> W. Hörandner, ‘Customs and Beliefs as Reflected in Occasional Poetry. Some Considerations’, *Byzantinische Forschungen* 12 (1987), 235–47, esp. 236–7; Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 31–2.

<sup>142</sup> Hörandner, ‘Zur kommunikativen Funktion’, 423.

This brings us to an inevitable question: is it legitimate to reconstruct for *every* poem an original setting in which these poems reached their ‘first’ readers? And how does this original reading relate to subsequent (Byzantine) readings of the poem? Or put in another way: are the poems, such as we find them in manuscripts, documentary records of a live performance or real inscription—in short, the textual residue of a *Sitz im Leben*—or are they clever literary evocations of standardized situations? In the absence of hard evidence, we can use a set of text-internal and text-external parameters, summed up by Emilie van Opstall in a thought-provoking contribution to this question (applied to epigrams). Deictic references, parallels with iconography, the naming of a patron, etc., might suggest that they were used as real inscriptions.<sup>143</sup> Using this set of parameters, we are entitled to posit that a considerable part of Christophoros’ and Mauropous’ poems were intended to be inscribed. Many of their religious epigrams combine a well known iconographic subject with references to a concrete extratextual space and/or object. I will not treat each of these epigrams separately, but it will be clear from this chapter, and it will be assumed throughout this book, that many poems now to be found in Christophoros’ and Mauropous’ collection (as well as anonymous poems in manuscripts) started their lives as inscriptions, or models for inscriptions. What I want to tackle here is the problem of what changed when they were copied onto paper.

A first observation to be made is that the representation of a poem in a manuscript is always a distortion of its initial reading context: it is no longer an inscription in stone, nor is it any longer the spoken words in an oral setting. ‘Poetry is out of context in a manuscript.’<sup>144</sup> We may adduce here the evidence from the poetic anthologies we mentioned above, which threw epigrams (that is, poems with an obvious inscriptional functionality) together with other poems that obviously did not have (or could not have) any inscriptional use, thus inviting the reader to treat these epigrams in the same way as any other poetic text.

Moreover, a dissociated kind of reading did not start only at the moment the poems were included in anthologies, centuries after their

<sup>143</sup> E. van Opstall, ‘Verses on Paper, Verses Inscribed? A Case Study, with Epigrams of John Geometres’, in: W. Hörandner and A. Rhoby (eds), *Die kulturhistorische Bedeutung byzantinischer Epigramme. Akten des internationalen Workshop (Wien, 1.-2. Dezember 2006)* (Vienna 2008), 55–60.

<sup>144</sup> Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 60.

conception. The schoolmaster-like reading of Mauropous 32 as recorded in Mauropous 33 may serve as a forceful reminder that a direct, 'literal' reading of epigrams is surely not the only one practised in the 'immediate' milieu of the poem. And we have already remarked that the vivid evocation of an oral performance in Christophoros 75–7 did not prevent the poems from being read by outsiders to this intimate occasion. The world of Byzantine poets and readers was surely a sophisticated one, and one focused on written texts as intellectual achievements, as 'signs of signs'.

### 3.5.1. *Deixis* and speech situations

To find a viable way to discuss these problems, I would like to make use of some concepts that have been used with profit in the field of Classics to analyse reference and speech acts in poetry.<sup>145</sup> Central to this strand of analysis is the phenomenon of *deixis*. *Deixis* is the grammatical and lexical means by which a spatio-temporal world is created, or pointed at, to which the present utterance is related. The deictic elements together make up a more or less coherent situation in which the narrator transmits his enunciation to the narratee (or, more fittingly for non-narrative texts, a 'speaker' to the 'allocutée'). This situation, or 'context of utterance', is recognizable to the reader in a temporal, spatial, and social sense. There is a 'voice' present (even if there is not always a literal grammatical first person) that we can call the 'instance of discourse'.

*Deixis* works particularly through personal and demonstrative pronouns. Some of these references are intradiscursive, referring back to elements mentioned in the text or speech, whereas others are extradiscursive. The world that is 'evoked' through *deixis* is always to a certain degree 'fictional', in that it is made up of words. This means that we should make a careful distinction between a context of

<sup>145</sup> C. Calame, *The Craft of Poetic Speech in Ancient Greece*, trans. J. Orion (Ithaca, N.Y. 1995), especially useful for the disentanglement of speech situations and instances of discourse; on the phenomenon of *deixis*, see among others: E. J. Bakker, 'The Homeric *οἶτος* and the Poetics of *Deixis*', *Classical Philology* 94.1 (1999), 1–19; G. B. D'Alessio, 'Past Future and Present Past. Temporal *Deixis* in Greek Archaic Lyric', *Arethusa* 37.3 (2004), 267–94; L. Edmunds, 'Deixis in Ancient Greek and Latin Literature: Historical Introduction and State of the Question', *Philologia Antiqua* 1 (2008), 67–98.

utterance that is conveyed by deictic elements, and the ‘real’ historical communication situation in which the poem worked. This also means that the ‘instance of discourse’ is not readily identifiable with the ‘author’, the biographical instance that establishes itself through paratextual material (for example, the person ‘Maupous’ identifying himself to his Byzantine readers at the opening pages of *Vat. gr.* 676). Likewise, the allocuttee (the second person immanent to the text) must be distinguished carefully from the historical reader or addressee of the poem.

One thing is certain: the poems, such as we find them in manuscripts, do offer us a very realistic and vivid presentation of an original setting. Many poems, through *deixis*, evoke in their texts a clearly defined real-life speech situation, whether in a spatial, temporal, and/or social sense. I will quote only a few examples. Christophoros 101, bearing the title ‘On the image of Saint Elias’, refers with the unmistakable deictic element ἐνθάδε (v. 2) to the image on, or beside which, it purports to have been written. Moreover, it directs itself to an onlooker of the inscribed image: ‘That Elias lives, how would you not believe that, when you regard this? // For look! Here he is alive himself, as you see.’<sup>146</sup> A similar vivid evocation of an inscriptional context is, for example, to be found in Maupous 4, where the beholder of an image of the Transfiguration is made to shudder at the sight he beholds.<sup>147</sup> He is even summoned to take a respectful distance: the epigram evokes and plays with the idea of a space of a few metres in front of the image, the space in which it can convey its message. In this poem too, the deictic element ἐνθάδε refers to a seemingly very concrete image.<sup>148</sup>

Very often, this specific real-life context is also indicated in the lemmata above the poems. To remain with the example of epigrams on objects: some lemmata of epigrams refer not only to a general iconographical subject, but to a precise materialization of that subject. The lemma of Christophoros 50 refers to one particular horse in the hippodrome of Constantinople,<sup>149</sup> Christophoros 95 to the church of St George in the Mangana, and Christophoros 98 to one particular

<sup>146</sup> Christophoros 101.1–2: Ὡς Ἡλίας ζῆ, πῶς ἀπιστήσεις βλέπων; // Ἰδοὺ γὰρ αὐτὸς ἐνθάδε ζῶν, ὡς βλέπεις.

<sup>147</sup> Maupous 4.1: Φρίξον, θεατά, τὴν ὄρωμένην θέαν.

<sup>148</sup> Maupous 4.6: ὄρῳ μαθητὰς ἐνθάδε προκειμένους.

<sup>149</sup> This may be one of the four bronze horses attributed to Lysippos, which are now in Venice. See R. Janin, *Constantinople byzantine* (Paris 1964), 194.

image of the Pantokrator in the Oatos hall of the Palace.<sup>150</sup> These are all well known public places, so the reader could easily conjure up a mental image of the subject. Deictic references are present in these poems as well. In this case, the question can be asked more urgently (but with inevitable futility): were they actually present in those places or not? If not, this means that the deictic references have no physical reality behind them, and the poem can only be interpreted as a re-enactment of reality, not as real in itself.

In other cases, the fictional character (or perhaps better: the evocative character) of the speech situation as referred to by deictic elements is made evident by the contrasts between poems that appear together in a collection. This can be demonstrated using the cycle of epigrams in Mauropous' collection (poems 2–26). As we have seen, Mauropous 4 establishes a vivid contact with the onlooker of the epigram and the image, offering the viewer moral advice. But the dialogues and addresses in the poems can take on other forms. In poem 6, on Palm Sunday (which arguably forms part of the same cycle as poem 4), the city of Jerusalem is addressed: it is upbraided for its former sins and urged to receive the Lord and lead a better life. In poem 7, on the Crucifixion, the poet himself is the person who views and attains knowledge through observing. In poem 9, on the *ψηλάφησης* of Christ, the disciples of Christ are addressed as actors in the scene depicted. In poem 14 the painter is the addressee. So if a viewer of these epigrams had the chance to see the whole cycle, he would immediately realize that 'the viewer' is just one of the characters in a kind of scene that is being constructed. The characters given a voice in these scenic ensembles include, amongst others: the poet, the figures in the depicted scene, the viewer, the painter, etc. Each of them comes to life in a re-enactment, sometimes including a lively dialogue. The fact that characters in the depiction can also take on a role in this re-enactment reduces the role of the viewer from that of a real viewer to that of a re-enacted one. So even in its first stage as an inscription (if that stage ever existed), the communicative situation present in the text (the speech situation made up by *deixis*) is the result of a re-enactment rather than a reflection of a real speech act. The speech situation, in other words, cannot in any way be interpreted as the residue of a historical communication context that 'really'

<sup>150</sup> Janin, *Constantinople*, 112.

took place. This still does not yield any conclusive evidence as to whether these texts were inscriptions or not, but it can warn us against assuming that every reference to an initial reading context is to be taken in a literal sense.

The vivid reality of the context manifests itself not only in epigrams. It is also clearly at work in poems that evoke the setting of an oral performance. In these poems too, *deixis* establishes a clear and consistent temporal and spatial framework for the poems. A prime example of this, already mentioned earlier in this chapter, is the cycle of Christophoros for his sister Anastaso (75–7). I return to this cycle to have a closer look at the ways in which Christophoros establishes a coherent and recognizable context of utterance through *deixis*, consistent with a social ritual (here, a funeral).

Poem 75 is a mourning song, a *μονωδία*,<sup>151</sup> in which the poet addresses his sister in the second person. Very concrete details are given: Christophoros specifies that his sister died on 30 May (v. 30). The situation described in the poem permits us to reconstruct a ceremonial event known as the *prothesis*.<sup>152</sup> This is corroborated by the indication in the title that Christophoros' sister is lying on the bier (*προκειμένην*). In the poem itself, Christophoros also describes his sister as 'lying here',<sup>153</sup> suggesting that he is standing beside her body while pronouncing these very words. The speaker (or 'instance of discourse') clearly identifies himself as the brother of the deceased (v. 16: *σὸς ἀδελφός*), involving the whole family (v. 29: *γενεῆς ἡμετέρης*). His poetic speech is clearly set as being pronounced during the ceremony: the closing verses of 75 convey the impression that at the very moment when this poem is being pronounced, Anastaso is being carried away from home, beginning her funeral procession (vv. 39–40):

σπενάχω, αἶρομένου σκίμποδος ἦδη·  
ἐπὶ γὰρ τύμβον ἄγη, εὐχρὸε κούρη.

*I sigh, now that your couch is already being lifted,  
for you are being carried to your grave, fair-skinned maiden.*

<sup>151</sup> See K. Demoen, 'Phrasis poikilē. Imitatio and Variatio in the Poetry Book of Christophoros Mitylenaios', in: A. Rhoby and E. Fischer (eds), *Imitatio—Aemulatio—Variatio. Akten des internationalen wissenschaftlichen Symposions zur byzantinischen Sprache und Literatur* (Vienna 2010), 103–18, esp. 116–17 for generic markers identifying this poem as a lament or *μονωδία*.

<sup>152</sup> Crimi, *Canzoniere*, 118.

<sup>153</sup> Christophoros 75.19: *κυπάριτος καθάπερ ἐνθάδε κείσαι*.

The genitive absolute used to describe this event, combined with the present tense of *σπενάχω*, referring to the speaker's own words, implies that the lifting of the bier is happening while he is pronouncing this very poem.

These verses prepare for the next poem (poem 76), the first verse of which picks up where the preceding poem left off: 'There, you are being carried away, leaving your home!'<sup>154</sup> Poem 76 is thus presented as being pronounced during this funeral procession. The title refers to the name of the ceremony, the *ἐκφορά*; the preposition *ἐπί* in the lemma, instead of the usual *εἰς*, throws into relief the contemporaneity of enunciation and ceremony. The interjection *ἰδοῦ* and the present tense enhance this impression.

Poem 77, in turn, is devised as the funeral oration proper (title: *ἐπιτάφια*). The poem is very badly damaged, but, nevertheless, here too the traces of an oral recitation are emphatically present. For example, at a certain point, apparently struggling for words, the poet cries out in person to his sister: 'What words will I find for you?'<sup>155</sup> The speaker again emphatically identifies himself as the brother of the deceased: he consciously depicts himself as the loving brother about to bury his sister (vv. 62–5); but turning this duty into what seems like the offering of final sacramental honours (vv. 66–79), he is now, at the last, paying sincere homage with his words (vv. 98–102). It is a perhaps unintentional, but striking, reversal of poem 75 that Anastaso's face is now said to be pale instead of rose-red.<sup>156</sup>

In these three poems, a scene is evoked that portrays the poet pronouncing these very words while he is accompanying his sister to her grave. The context into which the poem places itself is decidedly a ritual occasion, in which the same words that we see on the page are performed orally. The form of a cycle of poems closely corresponding to the unfolding of a ceremony is not without parallel: there are also twelfth-century poems written to accompany the successive stages of a ceremonial, in that case a wedding ceremony.<sup>157</sup>

<sup>154</sup> Christophoros 76.1: *Ἴδοὺ λιπούσα τὸν σὸν οἶκον ἐκφέρη.*

<sup>155</sup> Christophoros 77.49: *ἐγὼ δὲ πρὸς σὲ ποῖον εὐρήσω λόγον.*

<sup>156</sup> Christophoros 77.4. See also Demoen, 'Phrasis poikilē', 117.

<sup>157</sup> W. Hörandner, 'Court Poetry: Questions of Motifs, Structure and Function', in: E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Rhetoric in Byzantium* (Aldershot 2003), 75–85, esp. 79–83, with reference to a poem by Niketas Choniates.

Christophoros goes to great lengths to underscore the biographical reality of his poems. He does so by providing very concrete details (for instance, the name of his sister and the date of her death). But in addition, he identifies the speaker of his poems with the biographical person responsible for the poetic collection that the reader has in front of him. This is established particularly through the two poems that follow in the collection and that portray the reaction of Petros upon reading the poems (see above, 84–7). When Petros, in poem 79 asks how Christophoros (named as such) could write such beautiful verses while in mourning, the mourning *ego* of poems 75–7 is expressly identified with none other than Christophoros Mitylenaios, the biographical figure, known to Petros and to subsequent readers. This funeral cycle, such as we and the Byzantine reader find it in the collection, presents itself as a faithful residue of a *Sitz im Leben*. It does so through coherent and emphatic *deixis* and an autobiographical narrative.

The case of Mauropous 32 and 33 (see above, 87–90) is different. The instance of discourse in poem 32, the all-wise authoritative voice giving advice and explanation to the object (although he is not grammatically present), is far removed from the poet who is criticized in poem 33. Likewise, the allocuttee of poem 32 (a viewer of the object, also only implicitly present) seems a far cry from the reader giving comments in poem 33. The context of utterance as established through the deictic system of poem 32 (referring to an object depicting the Crucifixion) is here dissociated from the ‘real’ historical actors of the communication.

### 3.5.2. Switching contexts

Another point to address is that a poem ‘in stone’ or in another real-life setting can be related in several ways to poems in manuscripts. To see this, we may turn to the following inscription, still visible today above the entrance door of the church of the monastery of Grottaferrata:<sup>158</sup>

Οὔκου Θεοῦ μέλλοντες εἰσβαίνειν πύλην  
 Ἐξω γένοισθε τῆς μέθης τῶν φροντίδων  
 Ἴν' εὐμενῶς εὐροίτε τὸν κριτὴν ἔσω.

<sup>158</sup> Guillou, *Recueil*, 119.



*You, about to enter the gate of God's house,  
free yourself from the intoxication of cares  
so that, inside, you may find the judge benevolent.*

Palaeographical analysis suggests these verses were inscribed in the eleventh century, not long after the foundation of the monastery in 1004.<sup>159</sup> Anyone about to enter the church would see this inscription and have the impression of being addressed personally through the second person plural. The message inscribed on the church would be read by such a viewer as relevant to him- or herself at that moment and in that place; in other words, it perfectly fits the situation. Within this context, readers would also be able to identify the sender of the message as a religious authority somehow connected with the foundation of the monastery. In other words, this could be regarded as a piece of eleventh-century poetry with a clearly defined function in a real-life setting.

However, the epigram was composed much earlier; it is in fact a work of Theodoros Stoudites. His poem 46 is almost identical;<sup>160</sup> only the fourth line has been omitted in the Grottaferrata inscription. The situational context for which the epigram was originally composed is the same, as the lemma to Theodoros' poem makes clear: *Εἰς τὴν πρώτην εἴσοδον τοῦ ναοῦ*. This is also the place where we find this epigram in Grottaferrata. Theodoros' name is nowhere mentioned in the neighbourhood of the Grottaferrata inscription. Although Theodoros wrote the epigram with another audience in mind, probably the monks of the monastery *tou Stoudiou* in Constantinople, his poem still speaks directly to the eleventh-century visitor to Grottaferrata. Reuse of existing epigrams in such contexts is by no means rare: several inscriptions (especially, it seems, above doors in churches) reuse older texts.<sup>161</sup> Epigrams could even be reused when the situation was in fact slightly different.<sup>162</sup>

<sup>159</sup> Guillou, *Recueil*, 119–20.

<sup>160</sup> See Speck (ed.), *Theodoros Stoudites*, 64–6, where Speck lists some other poems of Theodoros transmitted through inscriptions: for example, epigram 32 was inscribed on the narthex of the eleventh-century monastery *Nea Monè* on Chios.

<sup>161</sup> W. Hörandner, 'Zu einigen religiösen Epigrammen', in: U. Crisculo and R. Maisano (eds), *Synodia. Studia humanitatis Antonio Garzya septuagenario ab amicis atque discipulis dicata* (Naples 1997), 431–42, at 441–2.

<sup>162</sup> H. Maguire, *Image and Imagination: The Byzantine Epigram as Evidence for Viewer Response* (Toronto 1996), 6–9.

Similarly, eleventh-century poetry was also later reused for inscriptions. The iambic calendar of Christophoros Mitylenaios in particular yielded a rich seam for inscriptions in churches.<sup>163</sup> Probably these inscriptions are taken from the *Menaia*, rather than directly from Christophoros' corpus. Again, as in the example of Grottaferrata, this demonstrates that 'original' use is not always the same as 'inscriptional' use.

Some poems ended up as inscriptions, even if they did not originally have apparent inscriptional potential. A notable example is Psellos' poem 10, an allegorical interpretation of an enigmatic Bible verse (Matthew 13.3, Luke 13.21). This poem was, strangely enough, inscribed in the cave sanctuary of Hagios Andreas in the village of Chalkiopoulosi.<sup>164</sup>

The ease with which poems could switch contexts is undoubtedly related to the standardized nature of iconography and other cultural contexts in Byzantium. The meaning of any sacred space is closely connected with conventional liturgical and theological expressions or formulae. For example, it would be very hard to find an epigram (inscriptional or not) referring to a threshold or door of a religious building *without* the conventional theme of inspiring awe. Every Byzantine already had a clear mental image of the religious scene in mind. So a reference with ἐνθάδε does not necessarily need to point to a concrete physical point in space. In the terminology of Bühler, who differentiated between *deixis ad oculos* and *deixis ad phantasma* (that is, references to visible things and references to things that are not physically visible at the moment of enunciation, but which the audience would easily conjure up),<sup>165</sup> we can posit that the latter would surely function very well for Byzantine poetry. From this perspective, the ubiquitous lemma 'εἰς plus subject' conveniently anticipates the range of contexts in which the poem could function. Any poem that clearly suits a given occasion could be brought back to life if desired. This could mean that for the Byzantine reader of the poem in its paper form, the poem could be called to life in a cultural situation that he would instantly recognize. Any poem had the potential to be

<sup>163</sup> A. Rhoby, 'On the Inscriptional Versions of the Epigrams of Christophoros Mitylenaios', in: Bernard and Demoen (eds), *Poetry and its Contexts*, 147–54, who lists 32 instances, of which 22 are in the church of Treskavač.

<sup>164</sup> Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Fresken und Mosaiken*, no. 62.

<sup>165</sup> K. Bühler, *Sprachtheorie: Die Darstellungsfunktion der Sprache* (Jena 1934), with the help of Edmunds, 'Deixis'.

reused. Sometimes the lemmata specify that the poem is made for a specific image (as in Christophoros 101: *Εἰς τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ ἁγίου Ἑλίου*), but more often this is not the case, because it was understood that the religious subject (say, the Transfiguration in Christophoros 25) was always represented in the same way. The references to ‘here’ (as in the first verse of Christophoros 25) do not need to apply to one concrete object, but may apply to any iconographic representation of the subject. The reference ‘here’, just as the reference ‘yesterday’ in Christophoros 90 (see the Introduction) may be conjured up at will by any knowledgeable reader and does not need to conceal a concrete referent in historical space and time.

This also explains the many possible relationships between epigrams in manuscripts and their realizations outside books. We sometimes encounter a string of very similar poems on the same subject: in these cases, it has been thought that the poems were trial pieces, from which the patron could choose the one he liked the most. There is the example of a series of epigrams on a silver cup, offered to the eleventh-century aristocrat Konstantinos Dalassenos; scholars have surmised that this series was such a series of trial pieces offered to the patron to make a selection.<sup>166</sup>

These examples serve to demonstrate that the reading history of a Byzantine poem does not consist simply of an original time at which it served in a *Sitz im Leben* situation, after which, by being collected in manuscripts, it degraded into a philological fossil. The status of the poem remained that of a text that could potentially be used in such a setting.

The question in this regard is what exactly changes when a poem is put on paper. Readings of poems on buildings and objects are governed by an inevitable context: viewers of an inscription could not disconnect the message and signification of the text from the space on which it was visible, nor could an audience disconnect the words they heard in a particular place from the environment and social gathering in which they were participating. This is in contrast to the most obvious form in which we would imagine reading a poem: namely, in books. In books, the immediate context gives way to a textual context, and even if the immediate context is re-enacted, it no longer imposes itself. The reading context of a book, to our mind, rather

<sup>166</sup> Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 42–4; See also Maguire, *Image and Imagination*, 8–9. For these poems on silver cups, see also section 8.2.

encourages a dissociated kind of interpretative strategy, apprehending texts as independent creators of new, imaginative, contexts.<sup>167</sup>

I would argue here that in the world of Byzantine reading there was little place for such a dissociated reading. We have seen that the initial context of use did not always degrade into a lifeless residue in manuscripts: texts could be reused, as in the case of Stoudites' poem on portals of eleventh-century monasteries. But I would add that even in collections which gather together all sorts of poems, the essentially pragmatic nature of Byzantine poems does not give way to a purely detached reading. Perhaps the poem loses its potential to be reused, but it does not lose its primary significance as a utilitarian text.

When Mauropous presents the book of his collected works, he opens the collection with a poem that emphasizes that these poems are but 'a small taste' of his many works.<sup>168</sup> The conditions of their past production and the expectations for their present use are stated in this way (vv. 6–9):

τῶν λόγων οὐδὲν μικρὸν ἀρκείτω μέρος,  
εἰς δεῖγμα καὶ γνώρισμα τῶν ὅλων λόγων,  
οὓς εἰς κενὸν κέκμηκα πολλάκις γράφων.  
ἔω γὰρ εἰπεῖν οἷς ἐχρησάμην λέγων·

*So, a small part of my works should suffice  
to give a token and display of my complete works  
which I have often laboriously written for nothing;  
for I will refrain from saying which words I really employed in speech.*

Mauropous remarks that he has often composed works that did not find a concrete use. The same motif appears in introductory poems II and IV. This implies that he assumes a normal state of affairs in which his literary works *are* used, and that they were indeed used in the past, albeit not as often as Mauropous wanted, due to external circumstances. Interestingly, he adds that he used them 'in speech', if we take *λέγων* here in explicit opposition to the previous *γράφων*.<sup>169</sup> As a result, whether or not these poems were actually 'used', Mauropous at any rate intends the reader to read them as texts that could once have

<sup>167</sup> See W. J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London/New York 1982).

<sup>168</sup> Mauropous 1.29: *ὡς γεῦμα μικρὸν δαφιλοῦς ἀνθοσμίου*.

<sup>169</sup> So too does R. Anastasi, *Giovanni Mauropode, metropolita di Euchaita, Canzoniere* (Catania 1984), 1: 'tralascio di parlare di quelli che ho pronunziato'.

had a social relevance. The words *γνώρισμα δείγμα* and (v. 7) are important in this regard: the poems as they appear now on paper are presented as faithful records of authentic texts devised for real historical occasions. Following this introductory poem, the reader will find a sample of his poems, gathered here on paper from very different contexts. But all the manuscript does, according to this poem, is display them as they were written a long time ago, when the poet intended them to be spoken and to be used. The collection gathers and arranges, but does not adjust the content of the poems themselves to make them fit into a greater meaningful whole—at least, it professes that it does not.

A characteristic feature that reflects the ‘documentary’ intentions of the manuscript is the preservation of irrelevant details that are the residue of the historical setting of the poem. One example of this is the reference to Georgios, brother of the emperor Michael IV (1034–41), in Mauropous 26. By the time of the ‘publication’ of Mauropous’ collection, Georgios had already disappeared from the scene, and, together with his brothers, left a rather bitter memory for the Byzantines. Decades after their inglorious rule, it would be absurd to suppose Mauropous would have ‘made up’ this historical setting simply as part of a play on genre, given that this would have implicated him. Rather, his collection, as we will see in the next chapter, strives to give a trustworthy account of Mauropous’ life, reproducing separate texts that were made for separate situations.

The lemma plays an important role in this process of preserving the historical occasion. It is often the lemma that provides information about the context and the situation. It allows the reader to reconstruct the essential non-textual components of the occasion, without which the poem would often be unintelligible.<sup>170</sup> Christophoros 16 is an epigram on the grave of Melias, but the lemma specifies that Melias is depicted twice on his grave, once as a worldly person and once as a monk.<sup>171</sup> This information is necessary to understand the essence of the epigram: Melias was a successful man, but he also nurtured other, higher, aspirations. The references to this depiction in the poem itself (v. 13: ‘as such the painter has depicted him here’, and v. 20: ‘he depicts himself here again’) only

<sup>170</sup> Hörandner, ‘Zur kommunikativen Funktion’, 236.

<sup>171</sup> Christophoros 16.title: *Εἰς τὸν τάφον τοῦ αὐτοῦ Μελίου, ἱστορηθέντος ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ὡς κοσμικοῦ καὶ ὡς μοναχοῦ.*

make sense to the reader if he knows that the image was a double one.<sup>172</sup> Hence, Christophoros and Mauropous themselves likely provided the lemmata for their poems.

Seen more broadly, it may be a legitimate question to ask whether 'literary mimicry' is a possible literary technique within the aesthetics of Byzantine literature and within its reader expectations. In the case of Hellenistic epigrams, we have the so-called 'inscriptions fictives':<sup>173</sup> epigrams imitating as faithfully as possible an inscriptional context. The Hellenistic reader knows well enough how these literary epigrams play a subtle game with fiction and reality, putting up a mask that is, however, always to be recognized as such by the reader. It is my contention that literary play of this kind was not conceivable in Byzantine poetry: undoubtedly, a poet could put on masks, but these masks are the product of rhetorical impersonation, rather than a game of fiction and reality. The world in which these poems were written and read was not a purely textual world. As we have argued in Chapter 2, literature did not have an independent status, and it is this status that makes playfulness of this kind possible. The role of the poet as a public speaker ensured that the utilitarian aspect of his poetry was always recognizable for his contemporary audience.

By way of conclusion, I would suggest that Byzantines could view poems as formal exercises in metre and grammar, but that this kind of reading did not prevent the poems from remaining closely associated with the initial occasion, which in books is painstakingly and consistently reproduced by the lemma, or could otherwise be connected to fixed iconographic or social and ritual schemes by the Byzantine reader. As we have seen, poems on paper could even be restored to their original inscriptional context. Therefore I think that the difference between 'inscriptional' epigram and 'literary' epigram, which is often made by scholars, may not be of great importance: inscriptions could be read and assessed as an intellectual achievement, and epigrams in books could be read as potential inscriptions, ready to be inscribed again. In answer to the question stated in the title of this section: there may have been no firm dichotomy between

<sup>172</sup> This habit is attested elsewhere: see T. Papamastorakis, 'Επιτύμβιες παραστάσεις κατά τη μέση και ύστερη Βυζαντινή περίοδο', *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 19 (1997), 285–304, at 300.

<sup>173</sup> P. Laurens, *L'abeille dans l'ombre: célébration de l'épigramme* (Paris 1989), 49–51.

an ‘authentic’ text functioning in a *Sitz im Leben* and a ‘literary’ text functioning in an independent, purely literary, world. Poets expected their poems to be read both as pragmatic texts fitting a concrete occasion *and* as intellectual achievements; and this double function does not disappear even when the poems are set down in books.

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## Collections

Up to now, we have been dealing with poems as separate entities. But arguably, something changes when poems are placed next to each other. The reader of a collection experiences the poem in a way that transcends the sum of the readings of each poem separately. This is especially the case when the reader knows that the collection of poems is the work of one and the same poet. Both Ioannes Mauropous and Christophoros Mitylenaios made their own personal collections of their poems. Mauropous' collection is preserved in the physical form in which the author himself conceived it, that of Christophoros in a later and heavily damaged copy. The fact that they took care to makesuch collections, and to bring their poems together to form a meaningful whole, is significant in itself. This chapter will investigate poetic collection as an act that combines poetic purposes with broader social interests. The issue of self-representation will be a particular focus.

### 4.1. MINOR GROUPINGS OF POEMS

Before treating the 'big' personal collections of Mauropous and Christophoros, I want to have a closer look at some more limited cases where poems clearly belong together. On some occasions, we find poems that have such a close relationship to each other that they in fact form one separate poetic unit. These are surely not collections in the proper sense. Rather, there is one purpose for which several self-contained texts are made. It is sometimes even futile to try to decide whether these constitute several poems or just one.



We have already encountered Mauropous 55a and 55b,<sup>1</sup> a bipartite poem in which the first part forms an epigram on the second. In this case, the two parts are not by any means separated from each other in the modern edition. The manuscript is ambiguous: it shows a visible difference between the two poems (script and initial), but it does not provide a separate lemma for each, and it counts the poems as one.

Other forms of close connection between poems can be found. Christophoros' collection includes some intriguing examples. Poem 68 is a lengthy poem on the transfer of an icon of St Kyros to another church. It is followed by poem 69, bearing the title 'Epigram on the verses about the icon of St Kyros'.<sup>2</sup> This short epigram notifies the reader that the number of verses in the previous poem equals the number of fishes caught by the disciples of Christ (that is, 153; see John 21.11). Significantly, the poem is called *ἐπίγραμμα*, not a term that usually appears in lemmata.<sup>3</sup> This reinforces the subsidiary status of poem 69: it is emphatically only a corollary to poem 68. In contrast to Mauropous' two poems, these poems are counted as two: at least, they are so counted in the Grottaferrata manuscript, which has numbers next to the poems. Did poem 68 circulate in the form of a roll, with poem 69 attached to it, in the same way we have tentatively reconstructed the circulation of Mauropous 55? Or is the second poem a simple addition written by Christophoros when he made his collection of poems? It is impossible to give an answer, but in any event the two poems form one poetic unity.

Christophoros 66 and 67 also form a pair of poems, but due to the fragmentary state of the text it is hard to establish their precise relationship. Half of the text of 66 and the entire title of 67 are lost. This is what remains:

66. *Εἰς τὴν Εὐδοκίαν περὶ τοῦπεμφθέντος αὐτῇ χρυσοῦ < μήλου - c. 19 ->  
ὡς ἀπὸ προσώπου φίλου τινός*

*A . . .*

*κἄν «ἡ καλὴ τὸ μήλον» ᾧδέ τις γράφοι*

*. . .*

*οὔσης καλῆς νῦν ἐν γυναιξὶ σοῦ μόνης;*

67 . . .

*Εἰς τὴν γυναικῶν καλλονὴν Εὐδοκίαν.*

<sup>1</sup> See above, 94–5.

<sup>2</sup> Christophoros 69.title: *Ἐπίγραμμα εἰς τοὺς στίχους περὶ τῆς εἰκόνας τοῦ ἀγίου Κύρου.*

<sup>3</sup> M. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres. Texts and Contexts*, vol. 1 (Vienna 2003), 26–30.

Crimi reconstructed the sense of poem 66 along the following lines: ‘it would be pointless for someone to write on this apple “for the most beautiful”, since you are the most beautiful anyway’.<sup>4</sup>

It is obvious that these poems belong together. They are somehow connected with a golden apple given to a certain Eudokia by a friend (of Christophoros? of Eudokia?); moreover, they share the motif of female beauty, quite rare in eleventh-century poetry. The first poem is not an epigram ‘on’ that apple; in that case, the lemma would rather read something such as *Εἰς τὸ χρυσοῦν μήλον*, etc. Instead, Eudokia herself is the addressee and subject of the poem. The text of the second epigram fits better the purpose of an inscription on the apple. This monostichon is very probably the inscription on the apple itself, which was presumably mentioned in the lemma. The verse itself only names the recipient of the gift, with a flattering sentence. Poem 66 may in that case be considered as an accompaniment to the gift, meant to clarify its meaning (hence the addition ‘about the apple’, *περὶ τοῦ μήλου*), while 67 was inscribed on the gift itself.

Before we turn to the personal poetic collections of Christophoros and Mauropus, I want to briefly address the question of whether there existed a collection of the poems of Michael Psellos. At first sight, it does not seem that Psellos ever made a comprehensive collection of his own poems, just as he apparently did not have the opportunity to make a collection of his letters.<sup>5</sup> However, it seems that Psellos did intend to have some poems grouped together. Wolfram Hörandner has pointed out that the title of poem 6 (on grammar) in some manuscripts refers to a group of poems rather than to this poem alone.<sup>6</sup> The title above poem 6 states that it was composed at the command of Konstantinos X Doukas, the father of Michael Doukas, in order to introduce his son to the ‘sciences’. The title mentions a *Σύνοψις πασῶν τῶν ἐπιστημῶν*: in other words, a synopsis of all branches of knowledge—not only grammar. Moreover, in the first line of poem 6, the science of grammar and orthography is called ‘the

<sup>4</sup> C. Crimi e.a., *Cristoforo di Mitilene. Canzoniere* (Catania 1983), 109.

<sup>5</sup> S. Papaioannou, ‘Fragile Literature: Byzantine Letter-Collections and the Case of Michael Psellos’, in: P. Odorico (ed.), *La face cachée de la littérature byzantine. Le texte en tant que message immédiat* (Paris 2012), 289–328.

<sup>6</sup> W. Hörandner, ‘The Byzantine Didactic Poem—A Neglected Literary Genre? A Survey with Special Reference to the Eleventh Century’, in: F. Bernard and K. Demoen (eds), *Poetry and its Contexts in Eleventh-century Byzantium* (Farnham/Burlington 2012), 55–67, at 58.

first foundation and basis of studies',<sup>7</sup> which might indicate that poem 6 was only the first of a series of didactic poems addressed to the young imperial prince. The poems that briefly introduce a field of study may all have been part of this group offered to Michael Doukas. Other poems that can fall under this heading are 3, 4, 5, and 7. Poems 3 to 5—poems on the dogmas, councils, and canon law—are all introduced with a *καὶ* in the first line. For example, poem 3 begins: *Λέχου καὶ τὸν θεμέλιον τῶν καθ' ἡμᾶς δογμάτων*. This use of the word *καὶ* may indicate that they belonged to a continuous group of poems.<sup>8</sup>

As Hörandner has remarked, the manuscript tradition does not reflect this grouping of poems, since the poems are mostly transmitted separately. Only poems 3 to 5 appear together in some manuscripts, and *Paris. gr. 1182* has poem 7 after 6, which might suggest that the one followed upon the other. This may lead to the conclusion that the original sequence of the group was 6–7–3–4–5.

The fact that the poems of this group appear scattered in the manuscripts can be related to the peculiar transmission history of Psellos' poems. As we have observed above (69–75), the inclusion of Psellos' didactic poems in manuscripts was related to the particular thematic focus of that manuscript. A group of poems on different subjects was likely to be separated in order to suit the specific purpose of the manuscript.

#### 4.2. MAUROPOUS' POETRY BOOK: A LIFE IN VERSE

*Vat. gr. 676* is a unique and valuable manuscript in many respects. It is arguably one of the few poetry books from Byzantium, if we understand the notion of 'poetry book' as a collection where the separate poems are not only collected but also purposefully selected, arranged, and placed in meaningful contact with each other. But there is more: the material features of the manuscript help to underpin the aesthetic and poetic purposes of the texts it contains. It presents in extra-textual, paratextual, and textual ways a consciously shaped

<sup>7</sup> Psellos 6.2: *πρῶτος αὐτῆ θεμέλιος καὶ βᾶσις μαθημάτων*.

<sup>8</sup> Hörandner, 'Byzantine Didactic Poem', 58.

self-representation of Mauropous. The result is that book and life are made to run parallel with each other: it is a 'life in verse'.

#### 4.2.1. *Vat. gr. 676*: words materialized

It has long been recognized that *Vat. gr. 676* was written during, or just after, Mauropous' life. It is also clear that the organization and structure of the manuscript faithfully reflected the author's intentions. However, it has long been maintained, because of some reading variants noted in the margin, that the manuscript as such is not the autograph of Mauropous, nor the so-called 'master copy', both of which were thought to have been lost. This master copy would have been a manuscript produced by Mauropous himself, or his close associates. Instead, *Vat. gr. 676* was considered to be a close copy of the master copy.<sup>9</sup> The loose leaves with the poem of Hesaias at the end of the manuscript would then have come from the master copy.

However, Daniele Bianconi has now shown, on the basis of convincing palaeographical and codicological arguments, that *Vat. gr. 676* is the master copy itself.<sup>10</sup> This means that Mauropous himself planned every detail of this very manuscript. The scribe was probably a professional scribe, hired to do the writing work; hence *Vat. gr. 676* is not an autograph. In every other aspect, it is a faithful reflection of what Mauropous' wanted 'his' book to look like. His personal interventions pertain not only to the selection and arrangement of his works but also to the organization and outlook of the book. This presents us with a unique opportunity to read and examine poetry not only as the author has textually composed it but also as the author has visually and materially devised it. From this viewpoint, *Vat. gr. 676* is a work of art that fuses the material creation of a book with

<sup>9</sup> N. Wilson, 'Books and Readers in Byzantium', in: *Byzantine Books and Bookmen. A Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium* (Washington DC 1975), 1–15, esp. 12–13. Wilson's arguments are adopted by R. Anastasi, 'Su Giovanni d'Euchaita', *Siculorum Gymnasium* 29 (1976), 19–49, esp. 21–2, and also in: F. Bernard, 'The Circulation of Poetry in 11th-century Byzantium', in: S. Neocleous (ed.), *Papers from the First and Second Postgraduate Forums in Byzantine Studies: Sailing to Byzantium* (Newcastle upon Tyne 2009), 145–60.

<sup>10</sup> D. Bianconi, '«Piccolo assaggio di abbondante fragranza». Giovanni Mauropode e il *Vat. gr. 676*', *JÖB* 61 (2011), 89–103.

the intellectual, poetical creation of texts.<sup>11</sup> The poems themselves, especially the poetic paratexts at the borders of the book, as we will see, frequently play upon this convergence of the material and the mental dimensions of the book.

The manuscript as a whole contains the collected works of Mauropous, divided into three sections: poetry, letters, and orations. It comprises 317 folia, made up of forty-one quires, each of them regular quaternions—that is, containing eight folia. However, the sixth quire contains only two folia (fol. 41–2), so that the end of this quire coincides with the end of the poetry section (fol. 42r). This last folium of the poetic section contains only a few verses; the rest of the folium was cut out. The end of the quire was thus consciously made to coincide with the important generic division between poems and letters. Something similar happened with the division between letters and orations.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, the book is surrounded by additional material that presented and organized the main body of the text. At the beginning, three loose folia are attached before the first quire. These contain some verses by Mauropous (poems I–IV), giving an introduction to the purpose and circumstances of his works. These poems, which are not numbered, are written in the same majuscule script as the titles and marginal notes of the main manuscript, by the same hand. The three loose folia close with a table of contents.

The use of a majuscule script for these verses highlights their function as paratextual material—that is, ‘book epigrams’. They are to be conceived as inscriptions ‘on’ the book as much as poems ‘in’ the book. They are proper ‘prefaces’ that precede the actual reading of the book. They respond to the act of opening the book and orientate one’s reading by identifying the author and his intentions in ‘publishing’ this very book. This is also evident from their title: poems II–IV are grouped together under the heading ‘on his own book’ (*Εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ βιβλίον*). They share some motifs with conventional book epigrams. The riddle-like introduction to Mauropous’ name in poem

<sup>11</sup> See also P. Agapitos, ‘*Η θέση της αισθητικής αποτίμησης σε μια «νέα» ιστορία της βυζαντινής λογοτεχνίας*’, in: P. Odorico and P. Agapitos (eds), *Pour une «nouvelle» histoire de la littérature byzantine. Actes du colloque international philologique, Nicosie, 25–28 mai 2000* (Paris 2002), 185–232, here at 207–8; D. Bianconi, ‘*Et le livre s’est fait poésie*’, in: P. Odorico, M. Hinterberger and P. Agapitos (eds), *«Doux remède . . .» Poésie et poésie à Byzance* (Paris 2009), 15–35.

<sup>12</sup> For these codicological features, see now in detail Bianconi, ‘Piccolo assagio’.

I is fairly common in book epigrams. Also typical is the stress on *πόνος*, designating the toilsome writing work of the scribes.<sup>13</sup> The term *πόνος* is twice connected with a term that refers to the intellectual creation of this poetry: *φρόντισμα* ('care') in poem I.1: *Ἰωάννου φρόντισμα ταῦτα καὶ πόνος* and *λόγοι* in poem V.1: *Ἰωάννου πόνοι τε καὶ λόγοι τάδε*. In sum, Mauropus is represented as being responsible for the physical coming into being of this manuscript, as well as for the intellectual creation of it.

The codicological and graphical features of the outer folios, containing the introductory poems I–IV and Hesaias' poem, ensure that these poems appear as manifestly not part of the main body of the text.<sup>14</sup> They belong to the book, but take at the same time some distance from it. Physically encapsulating the main text, they also mentally and interpretatively form a shell around the collection, guiding the presuppositions with which the reader sets out to read the book. They form a paratextual 'fringe', a liminal space that the reader crosses upon beginning to read the book.<sup>15</sup>

The main thought that pervades the poetic prefaces is the fear of the author that the book will not be read and will remain silent. These concerns are resolved in the poem by Hesaias which comes at the very end of the book. This poem, written in a different hand, is to be found on one of two loose folia attached to the end of the manuscript, in the same way that the introductory poems are attached on loose folia at the front of the manuscript. It mirrors the introductory poems not only in the physical way it is attached to the manuscript, but also in its content. The beginning of Hesaias' poem addresses Mauropus' book as follows (vv. 3–5):<sup>16</sup>

*θησαυρὲ πολλῶν ζωτικῶν παιδευμάτων  
ἰθνητικῆ τε καὶ τρόπων σοφῶν νέων,  
τοὺς ἀκροατὰς διδαχαῖς σὺ σεμνύνεις.*

*Treasury of many vital lessons  
and guide of new and wise manners,  
you exalt the listeners with your instruction.*

<sup>13</sup> See for example the ubiquitous epigrams *Θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον καὶ Γεωργίου πόνος*, where the name of Georgios can be supplanted by any other name.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Bianconi, 'Piccolo assaggio', 99, who also points to the alternation of flesh and hair sides.

<sup>15</sup> For the notion of paratexts as 'fringes', see G. Genette, *Seuils* (Paris 1987).

<sup>16</sup> P. de Lagarde (ed.), *Iohannis Euchaitorum Metropolitae quae in Codice Vaticano Graeco 676 supersunt* (Göttingen 1882), iv–v.

This provides an apt response to the concerns expressed by Mauropous in the introductory poems. Mauropous' writings, affirms Hesaias, are extremely expedient for the moral elevation and intellectual enjoyment of their readership. As a result, Hesaias' poem and the introductory poems form together a framework of question and response, guiding the reader in interpreting Mauropous' works. The positive judgement pronounced on Mauropous' writings could not, of course, come from Mauropous himself: this would run counter to his image of humility. The secretary, by contrast, was in the right position to pronounce praise, declaring Mauropous, thanks to this collection, the best 'of all men who bring offerings to *hoi logoi*'.<sup>17</sup> The different handwriting may have heightened the authenticity and credibility of this 'blurb'. Moreover, Hesaias' poem apparently lauded above all the diversity of genres present in the book. These praises are mirrored in the material structure of the book itself, which emphasizes these generic divisions. It belongs to the category of book epigrams written by contemporaries lauding the author of the present book, a category quite frequently to be found in the eleventh century.<sup>18</sup>

Aside from this overall organization, it is beyond any doubt that Mauropous carefully thought out the editing and the composition of his collection. This is testified both by his own words and by internal evidence. In poem 1, he makes it clear that he made only a selection of his works, as a 'small taste of an abundant bouquet of flowers' (v. 29). Poem 99, bearing the title 'on the corrected books', also hints at an editorial reworking. In this poem, Mauropous states that he has rendered the book a service, and has cured the illnesses in it. This obviously refers to a thorough revision aimed at achieving a final product. There are indeed traces to be found of works being revised at a later stage. Oration 178, notably, exists in two versions: one in *Vat. gr.* 676, and one quite different version, found in *Vat. Reg. gr.* 15, dated to the thirteenth century.<sup>19</sup> Anastasi has argued that the version in the *Vaticanus* is a stylistic revision of the initial version, which is

<sup>17</sup> Hesaias' poem, v. 28: πάντων κατ' ἀνδρῶν τῶν θυόντων τοῖς λόγοις.

<sup>18</sup> Compare the diverse epigrams in honour of Symeon Neos Theologos (see p. 27), and the epigram of Konstantinos Vestes in honour of Philippos Monotropos (inc. 'Ὁ τήνδε θέλων ἀναγνῶναι τὴν βίβλον) in *Moden. Bibl. Estense e Univ. a. T.* 9. 3 and *Athous Mon. Laur.* Ω 17.

<sup>19</sup> J. A. Munitiz, 'Blemmydes' Encomium on St John the Evangelist (*BHG* 931)', *Analecta Bollandiana* 107 (1989), 285–346; but dated to the eleventh century in Lagarde (ed.), *Iohannis Euchaitorum*, 106.

preserved in the other manuscript.<sup>20</sup> For most other texts of Mauroπους, and notably for almost all his poetic texts, we do not have different versions, since all later manuscripts with poems are clearly dependent on *Vat. gr. 676*.<sup>21</sup> It is important to keep in mind that all poems underwent a phase of revision by Mauroπους himself before they acquired the textual shape in which we know them. It may in this respect be interesting to see what changes Mauroπους consciously has *not* made.

#### 4.2.2. A double preface

Poem I is the very first poem the reader encounters when opening *Vat. gr. 676*. But there is something strange about this poem. It is in fact divided into two parts that apparently contradict each other. In the first fourteen lines, Mauroπους asserts that he has no official title. At line 15, there is a sudden change: this was all in the past; now he bears the burden of public responsibilities. This striking contradiction deserves some attention.<sup>22</sup>

The first fourteen lines, if taken alone, constitute a self-contained book epigram in which the author gives a detailed identification of himself. Mauroπους states that he is ‘a man who shuns a second name’ (v. 2): he has no honorary function and, consequently, one cannot identify him further. This remark is based on the custom of referring to people by mentioning their name and their official titles in the same breath. Apparently this is not applicable to him. He seems only to have occupied one minor office (vv. 8–14):

Οὐκοῦν ἄμοιρος προσθέτων ἐπωνύμων  
 τῇ κυρία κλήσει δὲ κοσμεῖται μόνη·  
 πλὴν εἴ τις αὐτὸν ἐν θεοῦ διακόνοις  
 10 τάπτων, ἐκεῖθεν μείζονα κλήσιν νέμοι,  
 φέρουσαν οὐδὲν εἰς διάγνωσιν πλέον.  
 Σὺ δ' εἰ θέλεις, τρῖσσευε τὸν τοῦ Κλαυδίου·  
 φθόνος γὰρ οὐδεὶς πατρικῶν γνωρισμάτων.

*So, deprived of additional names,  
 he is adorned only with a personal name,  
 unless someone, by ranking him amongst the diakonoi of God,  
 10 were to grant him in this way a more elevated designation,*

<sup>20</sup> R. Anastasi, ‘Su Giovanni d’Euchaita’, *SicGymn* 29 (1976), 19–49, at 24–6.

<sup>21</sup> A. Karpozilos, *Συμβολή στη μελέτη του βίου και του έργου του Ιωάννη Μαυρόποδος* (Ioannina 1982), 61–6.

<sup>22</sup> See also M. Lauxtermann, ‘The intertwined lives of Michael Psellos and John Mauroπους’ (forthcoming).



*which would not provide any more evidence to identify him.  
But if you wish, you may give him a third name: 'the nephew of the bishop of  
Klaudios',  
for there can be no objection against family names.*

In other words: if someone wanted to attribute a more imposing title to Mauropous, the title of *diakonos* would be the only option. We know that Mauropous held this low clerical function from around 1030.<sup>23</sup> Apart from his forename and this title, one may also give him a third name, that of 'the one of Klaudios'. This does not refer to his birthplace or father, but to the bishopric of his uncle.<sup>24</sup> It is a Byzantine convention to name persons without major function after the see their uncle governs as a bishop, by using an inflected article, followed by the genitive *τοῦ* and the name of the see of the uncle. This name serves here effectively as a family name, a *πατρικὸν γνώρισμα*, as Mauropous calls it. Moreover, we also know from Psellos' encomium that Mauropous' uncle was metropolitan of Klaudiopolis.<sup>25</sup> Also, according to this encomium, Mauropous avoided all offices for a long time, even when he had already attained influence with the emperor.<sup>26</sup> That Mauropous says he holds no office is of course absurd at the time of the 'edition' of *Vat. gr.* 676: since he held the title of metropolitan of Euchaita at that time, Mauropous could easily have referred to this title, if this poem were an introduction to his 'final' collection.

But it is not. At line 15, there is a sudden and abrupt change, turning upside down the immediately preceding information:

*Πάλαι μὲν οὕτως, ἀλλὰ νῦν οὕτω πάλιν·  
Ποιμὴν μὲν οἰκτρὸς Εὐχαιτῶν ὁ γράφων,  
Ἔστιν δὲ καὶ σύγκελλος·*

*So it was before. But now, to the contrary, it is as follows:  
the author is not only the pitiful pastor of the Euchaitans,  
but also synkellos.*

The phrase 'So it was before' puts the preceding verses in another perspective. There is a chronological distance between the two parts of the poem. Now—that is, at the moment when the second part of the poem was written—Mauropous is metropolitan of Euchaita. This makes, of course, a significant difference: he now has an office he can

<sup>23</sup> Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, 28.

<sup>25</sup> Psellos, *Or. pan.* 17.102.

<sup>24</sup> Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, 23–4.

<sup>26</sup> Psellos, *Or. pan.* 17.425–71.

pride himself on. The poem is consequently not to be regarded as one single poem. This is also indicated by its presentation in the manuscript. There is a cross and some free space to separate these two poems from each other. Consequently, these are in fact two poems; the edition of de Lagarde, printing the two sections without any other separation than a (fortuitous?) page break, is somewhat misleading at this point.

The first poem (let us call it Ia) is in itself a typical 'book epigram', permeated by the motif of humility, and hinting obliquely at the name of the author. It dates from (or gives the impression of dating from) an earlier period in his life, before his appointment. Perhaps it accompanied an earlier edition of poems, but it is quite futile to try to reconstruct this edition.<sup>27</sup> The poem Ia, as it occurs here in *Vat. gr.* 676, is presented as a vestige of former times, a document that Mauropous unearthed (Lauxtermann compares it to a *spolium*), and here, for the sake of the argument, contrasted with a new poem. Even if it was not 'really' written at an earlier moment in Mauropous' life (something that we can neither prove nor disprove), it is written from the perspective of the past. The word *πάλαι* in the first verse of the second poem takes this up: Mauropous contrasts his situation in that former period with his situation now. An impression of retroactivity is created also, as Bianconi noted, in the peculiar organization of the outer folios.<sup>28</sup> The message conveyed is that the book came to being as Mauropous' life progressed.

The reader approaching this book via the paratextual material is made conscious that he enters the life of its author, a life that had its vicissitudes, made apparent through the juxtaposition of two prefaces that are in deliberate contradiction of each other. The reader is thus steered towards an autobiographical reading of the book even before he has read any of the poems in the collection proper.

### 4.2.3. A progressive biographical logic

Mauropous' poems are usually numbered as ninety-nine. The number 99 may indicate a deliberate numerological purpose, since it refers to the word *ἀμύν* by means of isopsephism. But there is a problem. In

<sup>27</sup> Lauxtermann, 'Intertwined lives'.

<sup>28</sup> Bianconi, 'Piccolo assagio', 100.

the pinax of *Vat. gr.* 676, on fol. III,<sup>29</sup> the poems are mentioned as follows: *Στίχοι διάφοροι ٧η'*: that is, ninety-eight poems. This number is added by a second hand. Either this scribe has made a miscalculation, or the poems were indeed counted as ninety-eight. But there is no pair of poems that can be counted as one, since the end of each poem is indicated in the manuscript by a horizontal dash in the margin, and the beginning by a larger initial. The only poem that may not have been counted as a poem belonging to the collection proper is poem 1. As a 'preface to the whole book', it may have been considered to stand apart from the tripartite structure of poems, letters and orations. Unlike elsewhere, there is a decorative line under the poem, and poem 2 has in *Vat. gr.* 676 an initial letter that is larger and more ornate than the others. Poem 1, in that case, occupies a peculiar status somewhere between the introductory poems, which are, unlike poem 1, written in majuscules, and the poems of the collection. This may have misled the later reader who added the number.

However this may be, there is a well thought-out plan behind the arrangement of these ninety-nine poems. Lauxtermann discerned a circular thematic structure in the poetry book: apart from the opening and closing poems, 1 and 99, there are three large sections, of which the first (2–42) and the third (71–98) contain five thematic cycles mirroring each other.<sup>30</sup> However, these sections do not mirror each other symmetrically: for example, a long cycle of epigrams on works of art (12–26) in the first section corresponds to two short cycles in the third section (71–80 and 86–8). Also, a significant section of the collection (43–70) apparently does not form part of the thematic arrangement, although within this section too one could detect a cycle of epigrams on works of art (62–5). It appears therefore that this 'architectonic' generic organization of the poetry collection was not applied completely rigorously.

An alternative way to approach the arrangement of the collection is to read it not generically, but from the viewpoint of the author's interest in constructing a self-representative image. In this case, it may be read progressively, and not symmetrically. Poems 1 and 99 remain boundaries that respond to each other and suggest an autobiographical message that should be read in a progressive direction.

<sup>29</sup> See Lagarde, vi.

<sup>30</sup> Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 64–5.

The first poem guides the readers in their perception of the collection and its connection with the historical person Ioannes Mauropous. The poet renounces ambition, declaring that he believes that *metron* ('moderateness', but also 'metre', hence poetry) should govern both his life and his words. We will investigate the ethical overtones of this assertion in the next chapter; for the present purpose, it suffices to observe that Mauropous makes a connection between life and words, claiming that both should be 'moderated'.

This connection finds a confirmation in poem 99, where Mauropous says that now he has cured the illnesses of his works, but he himself is succumbing to the *ἀμετρία*, the imbalance, of his body.

99. *Εἰς τὰ διορθωθέντα βιβλία.*

*Καλὴν δεδωκὼς ταῖς βίβλοις ὑπουργίαν,  
αὐτὸς πονηρὰν ἀντιλαμβάνω χάριν·  
τῶν μὲν γὰρ ἤδη τὰς νόσους ἰασάμην,  
ἐγὼ δὲ συντέτηκα καὶ κακῶς ἔχω,  
κόπων τὸ σῶμα συντριβεῖς ἀμετρία.  
ἀλλ' οἱ τρυφῶντες ἐν πόνοις ἀλλοτρίοις  
καὶ ταῖς ἐμαῖς πλέοντες εὐδία ζάλαις,  
πρὸς κύριον μέμνησθε τοῦ κεκμηκότος.*

5

99. *On the corrected books*

*While I have done these books a good service,  
I myself have received a sour reward in exchange.  
For I may have cured now the illnesses in those books,  
but I pine away and am in a deplorable state,  
my body being worn out by too many hardships.  
But you who rejoice in the works of others  
and who sail quietly through my storms,  
remember this weary man before the Lord.*

5

As Daniele Bianconi has shown, poem 99 exhibits many features of book epigrams, especially the type of epigram written by scribes at the end of a book.<sup>31</sup> The request to remember the scribe in exchange for his labour, and the imagery of the sea journey, are indeed typical of closing book epigrams.<sup>32</sup> The word *πόνος* fully exploits its double meaning of 'work' and 'painful effort'. Just like a scribe at the end of

<sup>31</sup> Bianconi, 'Et le livre s'est fait poésie', 34–5.

<sup>32</sup> See K. Treu, 'Der Schreiber am Ziel. Zu den versen "Ὡσπερ ξένοι χαίρουσιν... und ähnlichen", in: K. Treu (ed.), *Studia codicologica* (Berlin 1977), 473–92.

his book, we see here the author of the works at the end of his efforts on behalf of *logoi*. Again, material creation and poetic creation converge. The authority over the book that the reader has in front of him is claimed by Mauropous in both of these aspects.

The poem also displays the typical Byzantine ideal of immaterial virtue procured at the cost of neglecting bodily and worldly values. The antagonism *μέτρον-ἀμετρία* acquires the value of a lifetime devotion: Mauropous has given his physical strength for the sake of *μέτρον*. The positioning of this poem at the end of the poetry collection reflects this. The martyr-like ending expressed in poem 99 invites the reader to read the poetry collection as a parallel to the life of its author. He has given his energy to the service of his poetry, exemplified in the toilsome task of writing, but also in the service of the moral elevation of his readers, who will reap profit from Mauropous' difficulties (his 'storms'). This way, the book itself is presented as a gradual ascent towards the ideal of *metron* as proposed in the very first verse, in a movement opposite to Mauropous' bodily condition, representing metonymically his worldly life.

This parallelism between life and works, as I would argue, can be used as the principal guide for interpreting the arrangement of all the poems. Anastasi has already remarked that the poems are more or less chronologically ordered, albeit not consistently.<sup>33</sup> Chronology is indeed not the prime principle of arrangement, but there is a certain biographical logic, which I will attempt to demonstrate by dividing the book in another way: not by genre, but by different types of self-representation.

The first quarter (2–26) of the poems forms a coherent and complete cycle. Above poem 2, we find the only title that does not pertain to one poem, but to several: *Εἰς πίνακας μεγάλας τῶν ἑορτῶν· ὡς ἐν τύπῳ ἐκφράσεως*. The specification *ἑορτῶν* (here 'feasts of the Lord') at first sight covers only poems 2 to 11, since only these poems describe feasts of the Lord, while the following poems deal with prophets, saints, and events from saints' lives. The specification *ἔκφρασις* also seems to refer only to poems 2 to 11, as these share more features with this genre.<sup>34</sup> As a result, only the sequence from 2 to 11 is traditionally seen as an autonomous thematic unity.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> R. Anastasi, 'Il Canzoniere di Giovanni di Euchaita', *SicGymn* 22 (1969), 109–44.

<sup>34</sup> W. Hörandner, 'Ein Zyklus von Epigrammen zu Darstellungen von Herrenfesten und Wunderszenen', *DOP* 46 (1992), 107–15, here at 113, n. 36.

<sup>35</sup> Lauthermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 64; Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, 79.

However, if we consider the greater sequence from poem 2 to poem 26, which are all religious epigrams on works of art, we see that each single poem within this series addresses a different religious subject. These subjects form together a complete iconographic religious cycle, consisting of the feasts of the Lord (2–11), saints and prophets, sometimes placed within a biblical scene (12–25), and, as a concluding piece, an epigram on the Pantokrator (26). This cycle is complete on its own, and the heading above poem 2, although not entirely correct, can apply to this whole cycle.<sup>36</sup>

Poem 26 on the Pantokrator is to be imagined as the highest piece also in an iconographic sense: it crowns the whole group. This final piece is also the one that refers to a patron: Georgios, the brother of Michael IV (1034–41), who out of his 'pious faith' (26.3: *πίστις εὐσεβῆς*) has undertaken this very depiction (referred to with *ἐνταῦθα*). This, I would conclude, makes clear that Georgios is the patron of the whole iconographic project, as reflected in poems 2 to 26.<sup>37</sup>

These poems are in fact a poetic counterpart to depictions in a Byzantine church, dealing progressively first with the feasts on the vaults (the most visible place), then the saints and hagiographic scenes on the walls, and ultimately the Pantokrator, to be found high above in the dome. Mauropous' cycle is in this respect very similar to other contemporary epigram cycles.<sup>38</sup> A comparison of this cycle's structure with that of the cycle of epigrams found in three manuscripts from around 1100 (the DOP 46 cycle), makes this clear.<sup>39</sup> This cycle bears the similar general title *Στίχοι διάφοροι εἰς τὰς ἁγίας εἰκόνας τῶν ἑορτῶν*, and has a parallel structure: epigrams on feasts of the Lord (1–17) are followed by epigrams on miracle scenes from the New Testament (18–32). The title of this cycle too refers merely to *ἑορταί*, which, as with Mauropous' cycle, does not exactly suit the second section. Moreover, there is no marked distinction in the manuscripts between the two sections: the reference to

<sup>36</sup> For this view, see also Anastasi, 'Il Canzoniere', 127–8, without further arguments.

<sup>37</sup> Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, 81 believes that only this image was funded by Georgios. If that were the case, it remains unclear why the patrons of all other epigrams of the cycle are not named, and why this indication of patronage occurs precisely in the final epigrammatic piece.

<sup>38</sup> For epigram cycles in general, see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 166–96.

<sup>39</sup> Edited in Hörandner, 'Zyklus'; and Pagonari-Antoniou, 'Τα βυζαντινά ἐπιγράμματα των κωδίκων Βατοπεδίου 36, Marc. gr. 507 και Ζαγοράς 115', *Δίπτυχα* 5 (1992), 33–58.

ἑορταί in the title covers here other religious scenes as well.<sup>40</sup> This cycle too is believed to be a literary counterpart to an iconographic cycle of inscriptions in a church, which is borne out by the indication εἰκόνας in the heading to the cycle.<sup>41</sup>

The reference to Michael IV in poem 26 makes it clear that it is set in an earlier period of Mauropous' life. It confirms the impression that Mauropous here reproduces an entire cycle without any adaptations, a cycle connected with an art project funded by Georgios. The author himself is not visible in these epigrams. Only poem 17 gives us a brief glimpse of the poet, with an indication of his name. In this poem, Mauropous calls the Three Hierarchs his teacher and his masters: Ioannes himself is still only a 'pupil and a servant'.<sup>42</sup> In sum, in this group of poems Mauropous represents himself as a humble epigrammatist, in the service of others.

Poems 27 to 42 form the next block of poems. Here we find several poems that Mauropous wrote for different occasions. The first group (27–31) consists of book epigrams. We find some *programmata*, that is, prefaces to other works, mostly his own orations. These prefaces present Mauropous as a man who attaches value to nothing but *logoi* (27.28, and especially 28.6–10): he is 'restricted and poor in everything else'.<sup>43</sup> In poem 31, a book epigram for a gospel, Monomachos is mentioned for the first time, as a distant patron. Poems 32 to 34 revolve around polemics on authorship and writing. Here we find the polemic concerning his own epigram (poems 32–3). And in poem 34, Mauropous criticizes people who do not write according to the proper *metron*.

Poems 35 to 42 are devoted to one genre: epitaphs. There are funeral verses for 'his friend' Michael the deacon, for the *proteuon* Theodoros, for Ioannes the *chartophylax*, for the *vestarches* Andronikos, and also for himself. They demonstrate that the author has a circle of high-ranking friends, which confirms the growing social status of the author. These friends are said to be held in high esteem, but, significantly, there is no mention yet of contact with emperors. In poems 44 and 45, on the liturgy in the Hagia Sophia church reinstated

<sup>40</sup> Hörandner, 'Zyklus', 108.

<sup>41</sup> Hörandner, 'Zyklus', 113–15.

<sup>42</sup> Mauropous 17.7–8: ταύτην ἀμοιβὴν τοῖς διδασκάλοις νέμει/εὔνοους μαθητῆς οἰκέτης Ἰωάννης.

<sup>43</sup> Mauropous 28.13: σπενὸς μὲν εἰμὶ τὰλλα καὶ πάσης.

by Monomachos, the emperor reappears, but as a distant figure, inspiring respect.

The group of poems from 27 to 42 thus represents Mauropous as a man self-assertive about his authorship. He wrote poems for an array of different occasions, providing services for friends and for mighty patrons. One of these is the emperor, but he is not shown as a personal acquaintance of the poet. Despite the different occasions he wrote poems for, Mauropous remains devoted to intellectual ideals.

Poems 47 and 48 are a pair of poems about his house, which he first loses and then gets back thanks to the intervention of the emperor. Mauropous here embarks explicitly on the theme of the vicissitudes of his own life. In poem 47, he appears as a devoted intellectual, an arduous and successful teacher. Poem 48 expresses thanks to the emperor for getting his house back. This poem suggests for the first time close contact with the emperor. The sudden reversal of Mauropous' fortune shows one thing particularly: the benevolence and mercy of the emperor (see poem 48.4), which now touches Mauropous personally. Christopher Livanos has suggested that the number of poem 47 may not be incidental: in the Bible, the numbers 40 and 7 frequently refer to the themes of exile and wandering.<sup>44</sup>

This change is the trigger for another Mauropous, who now moves in imperial circles. The various poems that follow (49–53) are polemical pieces which give proof of this involvement. Poem 49 is a poem on a religious subject, but, unlike the epigrams in group 2–26, Mauropous adopts a polemical stance, arguing against the anathema against Theodoretos of Kyr. He also conducts polemics against other authors (poems 51–2). It is in poem 53 that he first explicitly shows his alliance with emperor and patriarch: in response to some slanderers, he pledges his support in favour of the rulers.

This is followed by poem 54, the longest poem of the collection, entitled 'When he first got to know the emperors'. This flattering poem expresses Mauropous' feelings upon his first introduction at court, to Monomachos and the two empresses Zoe and Theodora. This moment is described as a turning point in his life (vv. 64–7, 72–3):

*ἄγρoικoς ἦν χθές, ἀστικὸς δὲ νῦν μάλα·  
κάτω νενευκῶς, ἀλλὰ νῦν ἄνω βλέπων·*

65

<sup>44</sup> C. Livanos, 'Exile and Return in John Mauropous, Poem 47', *BMGS* 32 (2008), 38–49, at 47–8.



ἄθυμος, ἀλλ' εὖθυμος, ἡδονῆς γέμων·  
 μικρός, κατηφής, νῦν δὲ λαμπρὸς καὶ μέγας·

...  
 οὕτω με παντάπασιν ἐξ ἄλλου τέως  
 ἔδειξεν ἄλλον ἢ παναλικῆς σου χάρις·

*I was boorish yesterday, but now I am quite urbane;  
 I looked downcast, but now I look upwards;  
 I was sombre, but now I am cheerful, full of gladness;  
 I was inconsiderable and disheartened, but now I am glorious and great!*

65

...  
*In this way has your all-mighty grace in every respect  
 made me a person other than the one before.*

Just as this introduction at court is a turning point in Mauropous' life, so is poem 54 a turning point in the collection: at this point begins a series of poems in which Mauropous emerges as a courtier and imperial orator—indeed, a person other than the one before. His dealings with the imperial family come to the foreground now. Poem 55 is dedicated to Zoe and Theodora. Poems 56 to 58 are epigrams on foundations and gifts of Monomachos. Poems 59 to 69 show us a very diverse picture of the activities of Mauropous: the majority of these poems are epigrams on buildings or religious objects, but no patron is named. They are interspersed with polemical poems (66, 68). Poems 70 to 72 are poems on objects commissioned by Monomachos, poems 73 and 74 on foundations by the empress Theodora. Poems 75 to 79 are epigrams on a Deesis depicting the emperor prostrated before Christ. Poem 80 mentions both (or all three: this is not clear) members of the imperial house as patrons, and poems 81 to 85 are funeral poems for the emperor. This group of poems for imperial foundations is crowned by poem 87, an epigram on an image with emperor and patriarch, which clearly professes Mauropous' allegiance towards the rulers.

This 'imperial' group as a whole (poems 54–87) encompasses several chronological phases of Mauropous' life: poem 57 is an epigram on an icon in Euchaita, and must have been written when he was already appointed there as metropolitan,<sup>45</sup> while other poems

<sup>45</sup> A. Kazhdan, 'Some Problems in the Biography of John Mauropous, II', *Byz* 65 (1995), 362–87, here 368–9, proposes that Mauropous wrote this epigram still in Constantinople, working in the chancellery; see the convincing refutation in A. Karpozilos, 'The Biography of Ioannes Mauropous Again', *Hellenika* 44 (1994), 51–60, here 51–2.

(71 and 80, for example) relate to places in Constantinople with a connection to Monomachos. This shows that it is not primarily a strict chronological principle that underlies the arrangement of the poems; rather, as part of Mauropous' overall message, this series of poems exemplifies his worldly success, his ambitions in the highest echelons of society, and his close allegiance to the emperor.

After this section, we find the poems which form the core of Mauropous' self-representation. These poems bear the title *περὶ ἑαυτοῦ* or *εἰς ἑαυτόν*. As I will argue (195–207), these poems provide a manifesto for his entire way of life, in which Mauropous tries to resolve the two different types of life evident in the collection up to this point: on the one hand, the successful courtier and teacher; on the other, the reclusive intellectual devoted to his *logoi*.

But *Vat. gr.* 676 is first and foremost the presentation of Mauropous as an author. Therefore, in the final poems (94–9), it is again Mauropous the author who emerges, not as a hired epigrammatist or orator, but as a skilful and independent author. He asserts his authorship of the *Neara* in poem 94, prides himself on his ability to quickly rewrite an oration in poem 95 (referring to Mauropous, *Or.* 181 and 182), suggests his capacity to write a sincere and potentially harmful 'chronography' (poem 96),<sup>46</sup> and acts as a critical copyist (poems 97–8). These editorial and auctorial activities culminate in a poem that shows him correcting and preparing his own works at the expense of his health (poem 99), linking up with poem 1 to make the circle complete.

We may conclude that the principal force behind the arrangement has to be sought in the autobiographical component of the collection. It is not so much the chronological phases in Mauropous' life that are opposed to each other as the rather different types of life. From a humble servant, Mauropous becomes an intellectual conscious of his worth, and then, through a significant change of fortune that is given ample attention, we see him as a successful courtier connected to the highest circles. In the end, an attempt is made to resolve the tension between the types of life that emerges in this way.

The unifying story behind the collection is that of someone wanting to keep his integrity as an intellectual, but suddenly overcome

<sup>46</sup> Many hypotheses have been formulated about the historical background of this poem; however, for more cautious observations, see Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, 33–4; 95–6 and G. Cortassa, 'I libri di Giovanni Mauropode', *Quaderni del Dipartimento di Filologia, Linguistica e Tradizione classica*, n.s. 6 (2007), 139–75, at 166–9.

with worldly success. This results in a crisis, and the admission that such a union is in fact not possible: man is subject to the vicissitudes of life, over which he has no control, no matter how hard he tries. In the last poem, Mauropous hopes nevertheless that the reader can learn something from the example of his life.

#### 4.2.4. Discontinuity as a continuous message

As we have already suggested above, 120–4, Mauropous' collection (as well as other contemporary collections of poetry) strives to leave the original setting of the poem intact. By this I mean that Mauropous allows the poems to still speak from their own original perspective. We will review this issue again by looking at three pairs of poems that reinforce this aspect. In these poems, Mauropous uses a peculiar technique, which we may call the technique of recantation. In each case, the first poem speaks from a perspective of an earlier moment in time, without foreknowledge of the future. The second poem takes up the same theme afresh, but now it becomes clear that in the meantime something has happened that overturns the intentions formulated in the first poem, and forces the poet to revise his opinions.

We have already discussed the example of poems Ia and Ib, two conflicting prefaces that juxtapose a quiet life free of troubles with a public life full of responsibilities. A second example is the pair of poems on Mauropous' house (poems 47 and 48).<sup>47</sup> Poem 47 is written 'on his own house, when he sold it and left it'. Mauropous addresses his house: he asks it not to be angry with him. It will now change owner, a thought which upsets Mauropous, because he regards it as a beloved possession. He fondly remembers the reading and teaching that took place in the house. Now he has to go where God leads him, leading a vagrant life; he wishes his house farewell and good luck. In poem 48, Mauropous has his house back, thanks to Christ, and thanks to the emperor. It is an unbelievable marvel, but such are God's ways. The poem closes with a prayer to Christ that He may protect Mauropous from dangers.

<sup>47</sup> P. Volpe Cacciatore, 'I carmi "autobiografici" di Giovanni Mauropode', in: L. Torraca, *Scritti in onore di Italo Gallo* (Naples 2002), 561–9, here 564–6; Cortassa, 'I libri', 149–50; Livanos, 'Exile and Return'.

Although it has been suggested that the departure of Mauropous from his house may be related to his promotion to metropolitan of Euchaita, there is nothing that proves this.<sup>48</sup> Be that as it may, the pair of poems is exemplary for Mauropous' recantation technique. In poem 47, there is not the slightest hint to be found that he will ever see his house again. The exclamation *σώζου* (v. 52: 'take care'), the grim tone with which Mauropous seems sure that his house will now have other masters, the resignation 'not to me any more (sc. will you provide the opportunity to study)' (v. 51: *ἡμῖν οὐκέτι*); all this gives the impression of a definitive farewell. Mauropous constructs in poem 47 a poetic reaction to a biographical event without foreknowledge of the future. Conversely, in poem 48, Mauropous experiences the reversal as an unexpected marvel. The technique of recantation here emphasizes the generosity of the imperial intervention: it underpins the message of gratitude for such an unexpected act of the emperor. At the same time, it reinforces Mauropous' image as a reclusive intellectual who holds no power over his own life.

The third example, in which the device of 'recantation' is most fully elaborated, is the pair made up of poems 92 and 93.<sup>49</sup> An 'appointment' (*χειροτονία*) forms the watershed between the two, as the lemma above poem 93 makes clear. Without doubt, Mauropous here refers to his appointment as metropolitan of Euchaita; the double preface had already made the reader aware of this. In poem 92, Mauropous' reason eloquently tries to convince his soul to hold fast to its principles and resist the temptations and dangers of this appointment. He maintains that glory, wealth, and renown are only temporal values, bound to wither and decay. In the end, this reasoning seems to prevail: the crisis brought on by the lure of an appointment is subdued: 'Well done! We hold out! No storm any more! The rough sea is brought to rest.'<sup>50</sup> Mauropous' mind is made up: he will not accept any appointment, he will continue his hidden life in a corner.

Poem 93 is entitled 'Recantation of those words, after his appointment'. Apparently Mauropous' decision to refuse the offer and hold

<sup>48</sup> As pointed out by Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, 94–5.

<sup>49</sup> Volpe Cacciatore, 'Carmi autobiografici', 566–9; Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, 98–100, both providing a rather credulous interpretation.

<sup>50</sup> Mauropous 92.102–3: *Ἐὖγε. κρατοῦμεν. οὐκέτι τρικυμία.//ἔξημέρωται πόντος ἡγριωμένος.*

fast to an intellectual life was made in vain: he has been appointed.<sup>51</sup> He has to admit in the first verse of poem 93, referring to the previous poem, that ‘those words of mine are not truthful’, an allusion to Stesichorus’ famous *παλινοωδία*.<sup>52</sup> He ‘retracts’ these words; not coincidentally, he expresses this with a refined allusion (v. 2: *λάζεται τὸν μῦθον*).<sup>53</sup> But he emphasizes that, even if it appears that they have not turned out to be true, they were still spoken in good faith (vv. 5–7):

ἔρω δὲ μᾶλλον ὡς ὁ μὲν λόγος μένει,  
ἢ πραγμάτων φύσις δὲ τὴν τροπὴν ἔχει.  
ἄνθρωπος ὦν, ἄνθρωπε, μὴδὲν φῆς μέγα.

*I would rather say that those words remain,  
but that the nature of events has brought about the reversal.  
Being a human, o human, do not speak idle words.*

Hence poem 92 may still stand as a sincere testimony to an opinion held by the author: it was no lie. The poem is a sincere piece, representing personal thoughts, voiced from a particular perspective at a moment of Mauroπους’ life; therefore, it may ‘remain’ as such. This is also what Mauroπους does by including it in his collection. But the poet saw himself constrained to recant these words because an unpredictable turn of events made them futile. The contrast between these two snapshots of the state of mind of Mauroπους is a testimony to the unpredictability of life: ‘The author himself can testify to this (sc. the unpredictability), because he has suffered this, has learned this, and now retracts these words.’<sup>54</sup> It is the contrast between the two poems that forms their message: that is, that an unpredictable and uncontrollable turn of events can cause men to change opinions and abandon previously held principles. As such, this pair of poems exemplifies human powerlessness and the futility of ambition. At the same time, of course, it serves Mauroπους’ interests: this way, he can underline his sincere desire to refuse the function of metropolitan, and deflect any accusations of worldly ambition. As a result, these

<sup>51</sup> Volpe Cacciatore, ‘Carmi autobiografici’, at 568, suggests that in poem 92 Mauroπους implicitly expresses his desire to become a metropolitan; this would flagrantly run counter to the palinodic aspect of poem 93 and the status of poem 92 as a *paraetesis* poem (see *infra*).

<sup>52</sup> Mauroπους 93.1: *Οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἀτρεκῆς οὖτος λόγος*, see Plato, *Phaedrus* 244a.

<sup>53</sup> See above, 49.

<sup>54</sup> Mauroπους 93.10–11: *μάρτυς δὲ τούτων ἀπὸς οὗτος ὁ γράφων, ἴπαθῶν, μαθῶν τε καὶ παλιλογῶν τάδε.*

poems acquire their exemplary force by being presented as authentic pieces, left the way they are. Poems 89 to 91 also, as we will see below (195–207), play their role in this process.

This principle, I argue, holds true for the entire collection. The reader has been led through Mauropous' steady path to renown and success (although he is reminded from time to time of his desire to be a reclusive intellectual). Notably, he has seen the close relationship of the poet to the imperial house. The autobiographical poems, however, and also poem 99, in hindsight, contain a moralistic warning. Seeing Mauropous' miserable state now, and seeing how he was the victim of external powers, the reader can easily conclude to what this success has led him. In poem 93, Mauropous indeed expects the reader to draw a lesson for his own life: 'let him take a sufficient example from this case' (93.61: *ἐντεῦθεν ἂν παιδευσιν ἀρκούσαν λάβοι*); and in the final poem Mauropous wishes that his reader may navigate safely through his storms, thus remembering him (99.7). Mauropous' mishaps and delusions are presented as in a confession to the reader, who may be morally educated by them, and who, by reading the poems, may also remember Mauropous and pray for his soul.

Lauxtermann concluded that Mauropous' poems, as separate pieces, are 'discontinuous stills of a particular event',<sup>55</sup> but that the form of a collection creates a situation in which '[r]ather than seeing his poems as discontinuous and fragmented entities, the reader is invited to view them as parts of a meaningful whole'.<sup>56</sup> I would add that, while the collection surely forms such a meaningful whole, the character of the pieces as 'discontinuous stills' is painstakingly preserved. They capture a moment of time, and this moment is as faithfully as possible transplanted into the collection (at least this is the impression that is achieved). This creates conflicts, inconsistencies, and contradictions, as Mauropous is apparently not able to control the vicissitudes of his life, in spite of his steadfast ethical principles. It is precisely these conflicts that Mauropous exploits: they create a feeling of authenticity, as if the reader is watching each poem as a faithful mirror of one particular moment in Mauropous' time. Like a diary in which the entries have not been changed afterwards, Mauropous presents the poems as vestiges of the past, mirroring different stages of his life, without foreknowledge of the future. There is thus a coherent and continuous message that is expressed through the discontinuity:

<sup>55</sup> Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 65.

<sup>56</sup> Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 64.

the ensemble of conflicts ultimately helps to underpin the apologetic message that Mauropous wants to convey.

These observations have some consequences for the interpretation of Mauropous' collection in its entirety. Even if the collection brings poems together, it is not presented as a consciously preconceived work of art, but the result of the gathering of poems after they have had their use. I think this idea can complement some earlier studies which have taken issue with these contradictions. In particular, the very different descriptions of the emperor Monomachos in Mauropous' corpus were difficult for modern scholars to overcome. For instance, a study by Guido Cortassa concludes that Mauropous' collection aspires to present a unified and nuanced picture of the emperor, with his overpowering might and privileges on the one hand, on the other hand constrained by the limits set by God.<sup>57</sup> The collection as a whole then conveys a preconceived and well thought-out image of the emperor. Kazhdan, on the other hand, has argued that the emperor showing repentance in the funeral epigrams 81–4 could not be Monomachos, because it contains such 'daring criticism' that we must believe Mauropous was a 'turncoat' attacking his former benefactor.<sup>58</sup> If we apply the ideas about discontinuity just formulated, we can instead argue that the different aspects of the imperial image in Mauropous' collection are dependent on the different occasions and genres for which he wrote poems, and that no attempt was made to streamline these (sometimes contradictory) generic conventions into one unified imperial ideology. Mauropous' collection was not a pre-meditated ideological work, but the result of a later editorial operation that intended to leave intact the original purpose of each poem.

#### 4.3. VARIOUS VERSES: CHRISTOPHOROS' COLLECTION

For Christophoros' collection, we have no contemporary testimony such as we have in the case of *Vat. gr. 676* for Mauropous. The only manuscript to transmit the entire collection is Grottaferrata *Z a XXIX*, written in the thirteenth century (see above, 20). Most other manuscripts

<sup>57</sup> G. Cortassa, 'Signore e padrone della terra e del mare. Poesia e ideologia del potere imperiale in Giovanni Mauropode', *Νέα Πώμη* 2 (2005), 205–26.

<sup>58</sup> Kazhdan, 'Some Problems, II', 371.

containing Christophoros' poetry retain the same order of poems as the Grottaferrata manuscript. Hence, it is assumed that the arrangement of poems found in the Grottaferrata manuscript goes back to a collection arranged by the poet himself.<sup>59</sup>

The datable poems in this collection follow a chronological sequence, stretching from 1034 (poem 8) to around 1045 (poem 95), and perhaps as far as 1068 (poem 143).<sup>60</sup> It can therefore be inferred that all the poems are arranged chronologically. This chronological sequence is held responsible for the fact that poems of very different genre, subject, and form stand next to each other. Oikonomides assumed that Christophoros just copied from a register with duplicates of his works,<sup>61</sup> and Lauxtermann too regarded chronology as the only 'simple method' for organizing his material.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, Crimi noted that there is a certain evolution in the collection: the milieu in which the poems are set evolves from the world of the court towards an intimate group of friends; at the same time, the dodecasyllable becomes more and more the prime metre, while the use of the hexameter decreases in the course of the collection.<sup>63</sup>

However, principles other than chronology alone may also have played a role in the arrangement of the collection.<sup>64</sup> To begin with, there are several sequences of poems that are intended to form one

<sup>59</sup> E. Kurtz, *Die Gedichte des Christophoros Mitylenaios* (Leipzig 1903), xvi.

<sup>60</sup> For a full overview, see E. Follieri, 'Le poesie di Cristoforo Mitileneo come fonte storica', *Zbornik radova Vizantoloskog instituta* 8 (1964), 133–48, here 135–6. Kurtz, *Die Gedichte*, 108, and Follieri, 'Le poesie', 139 proposed to identify the Michael mentioned in poem 112 with emperors Michael IV and Michael VI Stratiotikos respectively. However, the epigram exploits the materiality–immateriality antithesis so ubiquitous in epigrams for the archangel Michael (*pace* Crimi, *Canzoniere*, 102). Poem 143 is a dubious case: it describes a statue of Herakles in the palace called τῶν ἀρετῶν. Since we know that this palace was constructed by Romanos Diogenes (1068–71), the chronology of Christophoros' poems could be extended by a few decades. But as Crimi, *Canzoniere*, 14, n. 19, remarked, the statue could have existed and been described before being transferred to the new palace, while a later lemmatist supplemented the title.

<sup>61</sup> N. Oikonomides, 'Life and Society in Eleventh-Century Constantinople', *Südost-Forschungen* 49 (1990), 1–19, here 2.

<sup>62</sup> Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 65.

<sup>63</sup> Crimi, *Canzoniere*, 16–20.

<sup>64</sup> See also K. Demoen, 'Phrasis poikilē. Imitatio and variatio in the poetry book of Christophoros Mitylenaios', in: A. Rhoby and E. Schiffer (eds), *Imitatio–Aemulatio–Variatio. Akten des internationalen wissenschaftlichen Symposions zur byzantinischen Sprache und Literatur* (Vienna 2010), 103–18, from which many observations will be reiterated here. I have given a preliminary treatment in Bernard, 'The Circulation of Poetry', 146.



thematically uniform group.<sup>65</sup> These cycles make it clear that poems were not only ordered according to chronology, but also sometimes grouped around one subject.

A first thematic cycle is made up of poems 9, 10, and 11.<sup>66</sup> These poems deal with school life in Constantinople. Poems 9 and 10 praise the school of St Theodore in Sphorakiou and its director (*maistor*) Leon, while poem 11 is a venomous attack on Midas, the director of the school of Chalkoprateia. Poems 9 and 10 (as Demoen shows) form a diptych, exhibiting Christophoros' ability to write in different metres and adapt styles to them. Poem 9, written in iambs, exploits the possibilities of popular proverbs, whereas poem 10, composed in hexameters, displays an antiquarian Homeric diction and elevated style. This variation in style and metre, I would add, is all the more striking because the content structure is mirrored exactly. Both poems can be broken down as follows: 'The school stands firmly' (9.1–2a/10.1–4); 'Stylianos is one of its pillars' (9.2b–3/10.5–6); 'The wise and formidable Leon is its master' (9.5/10.7–13); 'With Leon as a guide, the students win every contest' (9.6–8/10.14–17); 'Leon the "lion" prevails over every other teacher' (9.9–13/10.18–21).

Poems 9 and 10 are thus an exercise in dealing twice with the same subject in different styles and metres. Poem 11, in turn, is composed in dodecasyllables, which ensures that this 'school cycle' from poem 9 to poem 11 neatly alternates between iambs and hexameters, and between praise and blame.

Poems 15 and 16 form another small cycle. Both of these poems concern a certain Melias, who holds the title of *parathalassites*. Poem 15 is a short poem of praise, focusing on Melias' 'sweetness'. Poem 16 is a funeral epigram on the grave of Melias, which exhibited a picture of him both as a layman and as a monk. There must have been a considerable time gap between the composition of these two epigrams, for in the meantime, Melias had become a monk and had died.<sup>67</sup> It is probable that Christophoros here broke up the chronological order and grouped together these two epigrams for Melias, thereby achieving an appropriate illustration of the futility of worldly life and values. This example shows that the principle of

<sup>65</sup> Crimi, *Canzoniere*, 20–1, for examples of such cycles.

<sup>66</sup> Demoen, 'Phrasis poikilè', 107–9, arguing for a 'compositional cohesion' in this cycle.

<sup>67</sup> Demoen, 'Phrasis poikilè', 109.

chronology was sometimes set aside to achieve a thematic contact between poems.

Another pair of poems is 18 and 19, both for the emperor Michael IV. Here we see again an exercise in metrical variation: poem 18 is composed in iambs, 19 in hexameters. Another, more loose, 'imperial' pair is 54 and 55: the former is an elegant encomiastic piece for Monomachos, while the latter is a poem written on behalf of someone else, addressed to the same emperor.

As I will argue below (276–80), poems 36 to 40 also form a coherent cycle.<sup>68</sup> It is possible too that poems 95 and 96 belong together: 95 is an epigram on the church of St George in Mangana, while 96, of which the title has been lost, is an epigram on a mosaic floor. Since we know from other sources that the mosaic floor of this particular church was famous, it is reasonable to assume that poem 96 was written for the mosaic floor of St George.<sup>69</sup> Another pair that in fact can be considered as one creative piece is made up of 87 and 88, two poems which give a fine example of *in utramque partem disserere*: poem 87 is written in answer to someone who has sent grapes, arguing for the superiority of figs, whereas poem 88 does exactly the opposite.

The most clearly articulated thematic cycles are the funeral cycles for his deceased mother (57–60) and for his sister (75–7).<sup>70</sup> As Crimi has observed, these cycles also show a structural similarity with each other.<sup>71</sup> Both cycles commence with a monody in a rather unusual metre (57 in elegiac distichs, 75 in anacreontea). In the cycle for his mother, the first piece is succeeded by three poems for his father; in fact the element of consolation for his father is already introduced at the end of poem 57, further connecting the poems of this cycle. The three poems are in fact one unity. Poem 58 serves as a *programma* to poem 59: it urges the father to pay attention to the answers the deceased mother will give from the grave by means of echo. Poem 59 is a rendering of these echoes, allowing the mother to speak from her grave by echoing the final parts of Christophoros' questions.<sup>72</sup> Poem 60 is again directed to his father, reassuring him with the

<sup>68</sup> For their similar content, see also Crimi, *Canzoniere*, 20.

<sup>69</sup> For this suggestion, see Crimi, *Canzoniere*, 20–1.

<sup>70</sup> See also Demoen, 'Phrasis poikilè', 115–18.

<sup>71</sup> Crimi, *Canzoniere*, 21–2.

<sup>72</sup> On this poem, see P. Maas, 'Echoverse in byzantinischen Epitaphien', *BZ* 13 (1904), 161.

answers that his wife gave him during the preceding poem. As a result, poem 60 is nothing more than a corollary to 59, the central piece of this triptych.

Somehow different is the cycle for his sister (poems 75–7): here, the titles indicate that the poems are situated during the different stages of the funeral procession. An anacreontic poem alternates with ‘iambic’ poems. The cycle is prolonged by the two poems 78 and 79, addressed to Petros, who had asked for the funeral iambs for Christophoros’ sister (poem 77). It is only logical that these poems to Petros are grouped together with the cycle on his sister: they form a sort of corollary to the cycle.<sup>73</sup>

It can be concluded that in spite of the overall chronological order in Christophoros’ collection, poems are brought in contact with each other in narrative cycles or groups otherwise connected by the same subject. Within these cycles, the poet strives after the effect of variation, by varying metre, rhetorical argumentation, or genre.

It can be argued that the principle of *variatio* has also influenced the general arrangement of poems in the entire collection. If we take an overview of the whole collection, considering the cycles as unitary elements, we see that poems of the same genre never follow upon each other. Here too, the principle of variation seemed to have provided the poet with a guideline. The riddles may serve as a fine example, because this is a very distinctive genre. Riddles are distributed quite evenly throughout the collection (21, 35, 47, 56, 71, 111). If we hold rigidly to a chronological ordering, we would be required to suppose that Christophoros wrote a riddle, say, every five years, which seems to me an absurd proposition. A similar example is the epigrams on the feasts of the Lord. These likewise return at regular intervals: 2 (Baptism), 14 (Annunciation), 25 (Transfiguration), 41 (Hypapante, Feast of the Purification), 80 (Raising of Lazarus), 123 (Christmas), 126 (Ascension); even more regularity is visible when the New Testament scenes are added: 74 (Death of John the Baptist), and 113 (Birth of John the Baptist). No feast appears in two poems: such a repetition would apparently have disturbed the variation within the collection.

This generic variation can be demonstrated by looking at the wealth of genres present in the short sequence of poems 41 to 53,

<sup>73</sup> See also above, 115–17.

falling between two cycles. In this short series of poems, almost every genre practised by Christophoros occurs. We have an epigram on a feast of the Lord (41), *ekphraseis* (42, 48, 53), poetic letters to friends (43, 45), a funeral poem (44), poems on saints (46, 51), a riddle (47), an invective (49), an epigram on an object of art (50), and a historical poem (52).

In my view, these observations show that Christophoros' collection is by no means governed only by the principle of chronological arrangement. The poet took care to achieve a collection in which there was a maximum of variation between the different genres. The collection thus consciously displays the range of different genres in which Christophoros was able to excel, and presents a fine example of *ποικιλία*, an aesthetic principle that stood in high regard in this period.



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## Ambitions

Poetry of the Byzantine eleventh century was produced by men who played an active role in society. They made careers as teachers, provincial governors, courtiers, and power brokers. The connection between intellectual abilities and social success is one of the most striking features of cultural life in the eleventh century. The intellectual elite was the context in which social power and cultural capital intertwined with each other. The most relevant social developments that led in the eleventh century to the formation of an intellectual elite are well known, and have also been summarized in the introduction to this present volume. At this point, it may be important to reiterate that the members of the new civil class were *homines novi*, relying on one asset: their education. Armed with this, they hoped to steadily climb the ladder. Social promotion could come about quickly, and intellectuals, at least for a short period of time, occupied unseen powerful positions. Intellectual criteria were actively used to mark social distinctions. It is a peculiar feature of the eleventh century, as Lemerle observed, that one dared anew to project learning and literary culture as an ideal.<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter, the role of poetry as a tool for social promotion and distinction will stand central. I will first examine the role of intellectual abilities in the typical career of a Byzantine high official, arguing that the connection between *hoi logoi* and careers is part of a representation, or ideology, that one may call 'meritocratic'. In the second part of this chapter, I will argue that the production of (poetic) texts formed part of the display of skills, ultimately aimed at initiating, advancing, or defending a career or a powerful status in society. I will

<sup>1</sup> P. Lemerle, *Cinq études sur le XIe siècle byzantin* (Paris 1977), 245.

also discuss the role of poetry in forming and defining social groups, more specifically in the shaping of an intellectual elite. In the final section, I will deal with the obstacles to this form of social ascent: there existed ethical constraints which worked against the coupling of intellectual activities with crude social ambitions. Our poets attempted to resolve this tension in different ways.

Throughout this overview, I will pay special attention to self-representation. Eleventh-century poets assumed a self-assertive tone, hitherto seldom seen in Byzantine literature.<sup>2</sup> Their own personality is very much present in their text. As I will argue, self-assertion and self-representation were essential tools in the process of pursuing ambitions through poetry. Each of our poets followed a different strategy, dependent upon his particular position. Throughout this chapter, it will become clear that there is a huge gap between the representation of *hoi logoi* advanced by our authors and the concrete signification of *hoi logoi* in their own (more or less hidden) agendas.

### 5.1. PRELUDE: THE VOICE OF THE OUTSIDER

Modern accounts of social aspects of Byzantine literature inevitably run the risk of adopting only one viewpoint, namely that of the segment of Byzantine society that mainly produced the texts we still have; and this segment nearly always coincides with the elite. For the eleventh century, this phenomenon is even more pronounced than in other periods: the greatest part of the extant literature was produced by people belonging to the upper court circles of Constantinople, and they have a monopoly on our information about contemporary society. However, here and there the voice of the outsider makes itself heard, commenting on the doings of this very elite. These voices may bring out the processes and motivations that remain silent in the texts of learned authors. They may serve as a foil against which we can

<sup>2</sup> M. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres. Texts and Contexts*, vol. 1 (Vienna 2003), 38–9; P. Magdalino, ‘Cultural Change? The Context of Byzantine Poetry from Geometres to Prodhromos’, in: F. Bernard and K. Demoen (eds), *Poetry and its Contexts in Eleventh-century Byzantium* (Farnham/Burlington 2012), 19–36, at 29–30.

consider the elite and its ideologies and discourses. In all these criticisms, rhetorical sophistication goes hand in hand with ethical reprehensibility. The social success of intellectuals is seen as the result of conceit and disingenuousness.

The texts of Symeon the New Theologian and his spiritual successor, Niketas Stethatos, frequently adopt an anti-intellectual and anti-elitist view. Placing the emphasis on personal religious feeling, they exclude the kind of subtle theological reasoning that was the domain of the *logios*. Their ideals are uprightness and simplicity, and they perceive rhetoric as trickery and a deceptive weapon in the hands of the intellectual elite. They stress the importance of inner contemplation over external demonstration of virtue. Sneering comments about people who use deceitful rhetoric for their vile ambitions abound. In his Hymn 21, Symeon mounts a particularly strong attack on the elite.<sup>3</sup> He states that the deliverance from Christ will not reach the following kind of people (vv. 55–60):

<i>οὐ τοῖς ῥήτορσιν οὐδὲ τοῖς φιλοσόφοις,</i>	55
<i>οὐ τοῖς μαθηοῦσι συγγραφὰς τῶν Ἑλλήνων,</i>	
<i>οὐ τοῖς τὰς γραφὰς ἀναγνοῦσι τὰς ἕξω,</i>	
<i>οὐ τοῖς ἐξασκήσασι σκηρικὸν βίον,</i>	
<i>οὐ τοῖς λαλοῦσι τὸρνευτῶς καὶ πλουσίως,</i>	
<i>οὐ τοῖς λαχοῦσι μεγάλων ὀνομάτων</i>	60
<i>Not the rhetors or philosophers,</i>	55
<i>not those who study the writings of Hellenes,</i>	
<i>not those who read pagan writings,</i>	
<i>not those who lead a theatrical life,</i>	
<i>not those who talk in a polished and sophisticated manner,</i>	
<i>nor those who receive great titles.</i>	60

In Symeon's eyes, there exists a natural connection between intellectual, especially rhetorical, skills and social success. The men steeped in classical education 'receive the great titles', but this type of man is denounced as living a vain and ostentatious life. Their way of speaking is seen as overly polished and beguiling.

The activity of writing is inextricably connected to the desire to display and to please, to such a degree that even people like Symeon and Niketas had to ward off the accusation that they wrote texts with

<sup>3</sup> Symeon Neos Theologos, *Hymnen*, ed. A. Kambylis (Berlin/New York 1976), p. 170.



such mundane ends in mind. Symeon advances the following motives for entrusting his thoughts to paper:

*So, I wanted to write this down, my brethren, not because I wanted to chase after renown—for such a man is foolish and worlds apart from the higher renown—, but in order to make you aware of the immeasurable magnanimity of God.*<sup>4</sup>

It is understood that, for the most part, authorial practice implied personal ambition and the desire to show off skills and to seek for renown.

This anti-intellectualism spills over in the writings of Niketas Stethatos, the disciple and successor of Symeon. In Niketas' *Life of Symeon*, the bishop Stephanos of Nikomedia, one of the greatest evildoers, is the archetype of the vain and presumptuous intellectual. Niketas also proudly claims that his great model Symeon had only enjoyed basic education and shunned rhetoric and secular education.<sup>5</sup>

In one of the rare new saints' lives of the eleventh century, the *Vita Lazari in monte Galesio*, the same suspicion towards functionaries and *logioi* is visible.<sup>6</sup> In one episode, the judge of the theme climbed Mount Galesion to hear the advice of the saint. Lazarus astonished his visitor with a very short utterance, which said more than a thousand words. The author then comments that the holy father was not a talkative man, and did not use difficult words, like some who are ostentatious (*ἐπιδεικτικὸς*) or ambitious (*φιλότιμος*); instead, he used a simple and unadorned language.<sup>7</sup> The message to intellectuals such as the judge is clear enough. Linguistic and rhetorical intricacies, and

<sup>4</sup> Symeon Neos Theologos, *Catéchèses*, ed. B. Krivochéine and J. Paramelle, 3 vols (Paris 1963–5), *or.* 17, l. 87–90: *Ταῦτα τοιγαροῦν, ἀδελφοί μου, γράψαι ἠθέλησα οὐχ ὡς δόξαν θηράσαι βουλόμενος—ἄφρων γὰρ ὁ τοιοῦτος καὶ τῆς ἄνω δόξης ἀλλότριος—, ἀλλ' ὅπως εἰδότες ἴσατε τὴν ἄμετρον φιλανθρωπίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ.*

<sup>5</sup> Niketas Stethatos, *Vie de Syméon le Nouveau Théologien (949–1022)*, ed. P. H. I. Hausherr (Rome 1928), §2. On Symeon's lack of education, see also M. Hinterberger, 'Ein Editor und sein Autor: Niketas Stethatos und Symeon Neos Theologos', in: P. Odorico (ed.), *La face cachée de la littérature byzantine. Le texte en tant que message immédiat* (Paris 2012), 247–64, at 252–8.

<sup>6</sup> On this text, see R. P. H. Greenfield, *The Life of Lazaros of Mt. Galesion: An Eleventh-Century Pillar Saint* (Washington DC 2000).

<sup>7</sup> Gregorios Kellarites, *Vita Lazari monachi in monte Galesio*, ed. H. Delehaye, in: *Acta Sanctorum Novembriis*, vol. III (Brussels 1910), 508–88, §119, p. 544A.

especially displaying them (for which the derogatory term *epideixis* is used), are an unmistakable sign of vain and contemptible ambition.

Kekaumenos too is an author who operates on the fringe of the Constantinopolitan elite, or rather outside it.<sup>8</sup> Kekaumenos was a military commander in various provinces of the empire. His *Strategikon*, presumably written in the 70s of the eleventh century, is a unique collection of moral advice, military tactics, and wisdom literature. Throughout the work, Kekaumenos shows himself suspicious of the intrigues of the court, the dangers of friendship, and the lures of worldly ambitions. His ideals, martial and sober, clearly lie outside the ideals of the urban intelligentsia, although it has been shown that Kekaumenos himself was also acquainted with the basics of rhetoric.<sup>9</sup> At a certain point, he addresses the '*grammatikoi* and *philosophoi*'.<sup>10</sup> Kekaumenos clearly places responsibilities on learned men: they should put their knowledge into practice, so that they do not possess it in vain. They should be *politikos*, a word with an ambiguous meaning that may refer specifically to the refined social life in the city (*polis*). Kekaumenos specifies that *politikos* is not to be understood in the sense of a mime player (*μίμος*) or a buffoon (*παιγνιώτης*), but as an advisor to better the lives of other people. It is hard not to read here an implicit accusation laid at the door of the Constantinopolitan intelligentsia, who put too much effort into displaying their learning only to impress, rather than for other reasons. Hypocrisy and disingenuousness are again perceived as properties of this Constantinopolitan intellectual.

Kekaumenos is also keen to underplay the learnedness of his own writing. In the dedication of the *Strategikon* to his sons, he has this to say about the intentions to write his work:<sup>11</sup>

ἐγὼ οὐχ ὡς ποιητικὸν τοῦτο συνέταξα πρὸς ἄλλους τινάς, ἀλλὰ πρὸς σέ  
καὶ τοὺς ἀδελφούς σου, τοὺς ἐμούςσ παῖδας.

<sup>8</sup> On Kekaumenos, see P. Lemerle, *Prolégomènes à une édition critique et commentée des 'conseils et récits' de Kékauménos* (Brussels 1960); M. D. Spadaro, *Cecaumeno. Raccomandazioni e consigli di un galantuomo* (Alessandria 1998).

<sup>9</sup> C. Roueché, 'Rhetoric of Kekaumenos', in: E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Rhetoric in Byzantium* (Aldershot 2003), 23–37.

<sup>10</sup> Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. M. D. Spadaro, *Cecaumeno. Raccomandazioni e consigli di un galantuomo* (Alessandria 1998), §23.

<sup>11</sup> Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, §191.

*I for my part have not composed this as something poetic for other people,  
but for you and for your brothers, my own sons.*

Whatever Kekaumenos' true intentions,<sup>12</sup> he is eager, just like Symeon, to distance himself from the tendency to write and 'publish' texts in order to show off one's abilities. The adjective *ποιητικόν* is intriguing: does Kekaumenos perhaps suggest that poetic texts were, even more than others, linked with the desire for display?

At first sight, we might be inclined to think that the opinions of 'monastic' or 'military' factions and those of the 'intellectual elite' are diametrically opposed ideologies. But the situation is more complicated. Vile ambition and deceptive rhetoric are also rejected in many writings of Psellos and Mauropous. In their texts, this rejection is motivated by an apologetic stance towards implicit (or sometimes explicit) accusations. Moreover, statements in this vein are often in contradiction to statements in other texts of the same authors that seem to celebrate and admire rhetorical display.

The texts of these outsiders make us aware that, from an ethical viewpoint, the connection of *hoi logoi* and social success was not as simple and self-evident as, for example, the ebullient *basilikoï logoi* of Psellos would make us believe. It is indisputable that the 'gouvernement des philosophes' did not go uncontested. Through the smoke-screen, another subtext may be dimly perceived. Particularly in the works of Psellos where he defends himself against people he calls 'slanderers',<sup>13</sup> it is clear enough that he and his friends suffered from a bad reputation. In the account of the connection between social promotion and the production of poetical texts that I will attempt to elucidate, one should be aware that these poets were constantly manoeuvring between opposing ideologies.

## 5.2. THE 'BEAMTENLITERAT'

### 5.2.1. New social trajectories

In Byzantine society, it was expected that formal communication would be conducted in a language that lived up to the linguistic and

<sup>12</sup> Spadaro, *Cekaumeno*, 229, n. 43 points out that some passing remarks about other readers make clear that Kekaumenos did expect a wider public than just his sons.

<sup>13</sup> Psellos, *Or. min.* 6–10.

rhetorical standards inherited from Antiquity.<sup>14</sup> The formulation of official documents, letters, and ceremonial speeches required men who had command of the by then partly fossilized language of ancient Greek and who were trained in rhetorical technique. Linguistic and rhetorical skills transmitted through education could be directly applied in state administration and ecclesiastical organization. The degree to which these requirements were taken for granted can be measured by the amazement in Psellos' account of the policies of Basileios II, who did *not* employ learned men in his administration.

*Political matters he did not govern according to the written laws, but to the unwritten laws of his own brilliant mind. Therefore he did not pay attention to learned men, but this group—I mean the learned men—he utterly despised.*<sup>15</sup>

The conjunction *ὅθεν* reveals that Psellos sees a direct causal relationship between Basileios's choice not to rely on political advisors and his stance towards the *logioi*. In other words, under normal circumstances these intellectuals did wield real political power, by giving decisive advice to the emperor. This passage implies especially knowledge of law, but it is surely not the only domain considered significant in governance. At another point, Psellos specifies that, under Basileios, the phrasing of imperial answers to petitions was devoid of any cultivation. He links this too to the fact that Basileios employed men who were not educated (*'pepaideumenoi* in *hoi logoi'*, as he puts it).<sup>16</sup> Psellos assumes that in his own time, conversely, imperial communication was supposed to be phrased in a refined language, by men who had enjoyed a decent education in classical Greek and rhetoric. Even Isaakios Komnenos, the emperor-soldier, strove to measure up to the standard: when he intervened in judicial affairs, he made sure that 'in order not to make language errors while pronouncing juridical terms, he left this to others'.<sup>17</sup> Scribes, secretaries, and notaries not only needed a practical administrative

<sup>14</sup> R. Browning, 'Literacy in the Byzantine World', *BMGS* 4 (1978), 39–54, at 41–2.

<sup>15</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book I, §26: τὸ δὲ πολιτικὸν οὐ πρὸς τοὺς γεγραμμένους νόμους, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τοὺς ἀγράφους τῆς αὐτοῦ εὐφροσύνης ἐκυβέρνα ψυχῆς· ὅθεν οὐδὲ προσεῖχε λογίοις ἀνδράσι, ἀλλὰ τούτου διὰ τοῦ μέρους, φημί δὲ τῶν λογίων, καὶ παντάπασι καταπεφρονῆκει.

<sup>16</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book I, §30: οὐτε τὰ ἐς λόγους ἐς τὸ ἄγαν πεπαιδευμένων.

<sup>17</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VII, §49: ἵνα δὲ μὴ τὴν φωνὴν σολοικίσῃ τὰς νομικὰς φωνὰς ἐπισημαινόμενος, τοῦτο μὲν ἑτέροις ἐπέτρεπεν.

education, but had also to be able to write in correct and elegant Greek.

These examples are indicative of a widely recognized fact: namely, that in Byzantium, education in ancient Greek language and rhetoric was a necessary precondition for rising through the administrative ranks. This process is particularly pronounced in periods such as the eleventh century, in which *logoi* were so greatly valued and cultivated.<sup>18</sup> Cultural competences undeniably functioned as tools of social distinction in Byzantine society. Hence, the separation between the educated and the non-educated entailed a division of power and wealth.

Basic literacy forms a first divide.<sup>19</sup> In the essentially bureaucratic society that Byzantium was, ordinary people stood in awe of the power of the written word.<sup>20</sup> Evidence from saints' lives too proves that education was seen by ordinary people as a necessary means to acquire success in society.<sup>21</sup> The *Vita Lazari* narrates the story of a monk who, with much effort, learned to read and write; he was despised by the other monks for his ensuing arrogance.<sup>22</sup> The social impact of learning letters is felt very strongly. But literacy is only a preliminary. More important is 'rhetoricity', the knowledge of rhetorical and generic rules, which can only be provided by specialized education.<sup>23</sup> By controlling education, the intellectual elite could appropriate learning as an arcane body of knowledge for themselves, in this way perpetuating this discriminative situation.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup> See e.g. R. Browning, 'Enlightenment and Repression in Byzantium in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', *Past and Present* 69 (1975), 3–23, at 3.

<sup>19</sup> R. Browning, 'Further Reflections on Literacy in Byzantium', in: J. Langdon (ed.), *Τὸ Ἑλληνικόν. Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis, Jr* (New Rochelle 1993), 69–84, here at 79–80.

<sup>20</sup> H. Hunger, 'Die Herrschaft des Buchstabens. Das Verhältnis der Byzantiner zu Schrift- und Kanzleiwesen', *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 4.12 (1984), 17–38.

<sup>21</sup> G. Cavallo, *Lire à Byzance* (Paris 2006), 26–7.

<sup>22</sup> Gregorios Kellarites, *Vita Lazari*, §234.

<sup>23</sup> G. Cavallo, 'Alfabetismi e lettura a Bisanzio', in: B. Mondrain (ed.), *Lire et écrire à Byzance* (Paris 2006), 97–109, here at 109; M. Mullett, 'Aristocracy and Patronage in the Literary Circles of Comnenian Constantinople', in: M. Angold (ed.), *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries* (Oxford 1984), 173–201, here at 183.

<sup>24</sup> For classical culture as a means of distinction by a tiny elite in Byzantium, see C. Mango, 'Discontinuity with the Classical Past in Byzantium', in: M. Mullett and R. Scott (eds), *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition* (Birmingham 1981), 48–57, here 49–50. For a recent study of late-Byzantine literate society with strong emphasis on similar sociological aspects, see N. Gaul, *Thomas Magistros und die spätbyzantinische*

Weiss used the term ‘Beamtenliteraten’ to describe the social position of eleventh-century intellectuals.<sup>25</sup> This term is indeed appropriate, because an administrative function is the embodiment of the successful use of rhetorical skills and the main form of social promotion. But intellectuals *pur sang* were mostly employed in education: they steadily built up their reputation as teachers. The most successful of them (notably Psellos and Mauropous) extended their influence at court, as counsellors, preceptors, and spokesmen.

Seen in crude economic terms, it can safely be said that there is a flow of wealth towards the social environment in which our poets were active. It was the state officials, who emerged from the civil class, who benefited most from the dilution of the treasury after Basileios II, through promotions, gifts, *rogai*, *charistikaria*, not to mention taxes and bribery (sources of income that, for example, play an important role in Psellos’ letters). All this ensured that intellectual skills and education in letters (or, generally, *hoi logoi*) were assets which could undeniably yield profit. Education was the cornerstone of social advancement for people deprived of other assets.<sup>26</sup>

‘Make a living’ out of *logoi* became a common phenomenon. In Psellos’ funeral oration for his mother, which sounds more like an autobiography, he represents his choice to study letters as a choice of a livelihood—the verb *ἐμπορεύεσθαι* (to gain profit from something) is telling.<sup>27</sup> A similar expression, *ἐμπορεύεσθαι τὸ τάλαντον τοῦ λόγου*, is used by Mauropous in his poem 92 (v. 26), but here in a more negative sense, as part of the successful life proposed to him, but refused in favour of a tranquil life.

All three of our most important poets came from a social background that favoured a trajectory such as we have sketched out above.

*Sophistik. Studien zum Humanismus urbaner Eliten in der frühen Palaiologenzeit* (Mainz 2011).

<sup>25</sup> G. Weiss, *Oströmische Beamte im Spiegel der Schriften des Michael Psellos* (Munich 1973), 7.

<sup>26</sup> See also V. Jezek, ‘Education as a Unifying and “Uplifting” Force in Byzantium’, *BSI* 65 (2007), 167–200, which sees in education not only a means for social promotion, but also for spiritual perfection. In my view, this study fails to distinguish reality and ideology in Psellos’ writings.

<sup>27</sup> Michael Psellos, *Oratio funebris in matrem*, ed. U. Criscuolo, *Autobiografia. Encomio per la madre* (Napels 1989), l. 298–9: *ἐμοὶ μὲν οὖν δυσχερὲς ἄλλως καὶ μέχρις ἀκοῆς ἄλλό τι πρὸ τῶν λόγων ἐμπορεύεσθαι.*

The story of Psellos' path to success is well enough known. He came from a non-aristocratic family, although his parents seem to have been rather well off. He was employed first as a secretary, before beginning his glorious career, and remained active as teacher, counsellor, and close secretary to the emperor, as demonstrated by his orations, documents, and letters written in the emperor's name. Mauropous hailed from Paphlagonia, which may explain his early connection with the Paphlagonian emperor Michael IV. Mauropous, who almost certainly became a monk before gaining success at court, was for some time the official court orator of Konstantinos Monomachos. Mauropous' case is special because his function as spokesman seems not to have been connected with an official title. He explicitly links the social success he enjoyed in his life to his 'eloquence' (see especially 92.39–40, about the *εὐλωπτία* bearing him many fruits). Christophoros was born in Constantinople.<sup>28</sup> He held the positions of *patrikios* and *anthypatos*, and was also *krites* of several provinces. These positions he may have occupied when he was younger, as emerges from the careers of other *kritai*.<sup>29</sup> Seals with Mitylenaioi occupying high positions are well attested from the tenth century onwards.<sup>30</sup> Hence, it is probable that Christophoros also came from a non-aristocratic but well connected family. The social background of our three poets is thus an ideal basis for the trajectory that they would follow in later life.

### 5.2.2. A meritocratic model

John Haldon used the term 'pseudo-meritocracy' to refer to the discourse, maintained by the ruling civil elite, that not birth, wealth, or any other asset should entail social promotion, but solely the merits of the individual.<sup>31</sup> This line of thought remains an ideology

<sup>28</sup> As he himself says in one of his calendars: E. Follieri, *I calendari in metro innografico di Cristoforo Mitileneo* (Brussels 1980), I, 3.

<sup>29</sup> On Psellos as a *krites* in the beginning of his career, see Weiss, *Oströmische Beamte*, 22–6. Other scholars are reluctant to see young persons taking up the office of *krites*: J.-C. Riedinger, 'Quatre étapes de la vie de Michel Psellos', *REB* 68 (2010), 5–60, at 5–28.

<sup>30</sup> J.-C. Cheynet, C. Morrisson, and W. Seibt, *Sceaux de la collection de Henri Seyrig* (Paris 1991), 137–8.

<sup>31</sup> J. Haldon, 'Social Élités, Wealth and Power', in: J. Haldon (ed.), *A Social History of Byzantium* (Chichester/Malden, Mass. 2009), 168–211, here at 179.

rather than a reality, of course: it was primarily advanced by one interest group, the civil elite, which was, moreover, the most vociferous. These *homines novi* could reap most profit from such a system that rewarded an individual's merits. It is clear that this meritocratic model is diametrically opposed to the hereditary and aristocratic ideology propagated by other sectors of society.

Psellos particularly, himself the offspring of an unknown family, frequently advanced the idea that wealth and power should be distributed according to merit. In a letter to Kerouarios, Psellos criticizes the aristocracy of birth explicitly, declaring that he does not want to be known because of dead ancestors, but because of his tongue.<sup>32</sup> In a panegyric oration for Monomachos, Psellos praises the emperor because he has not judged men by their birth, but by their merit:

*In old days, it seemed that the sources of prosperity and misery were regulated according to heritage, and children received from their fathers disparate streams of fortune which they then passed on to their own children. But you are the first to overturn this ignoble discrimination, and you redress the balance of fortune on the basis of merit rather than descent, thus reallocating rights and entitlements to us.*<sup>33</sup>

The rationality and fairness of this meritocratic system are also stressed in the funeral oration for Xiphilinos. There, Psellos makes a distinction between the ancient houses (*τὰ πρῶτα γένη*), and 'the other side' (*ἡ ἄλλη μερίς*).<sup>34</sup> He remarks that it would be absurd to prevent people belonging to the latter group from entering the senate and other administrative bodies if they have the right qualifications to do so.<sup>35</sup> Instead of judging on the basis of an 'irrational custom', the emperor rightly decided to select people for his court on the basis of a 'rational judgement'.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Michael Psellos, *Epistola a Michele Cerulario*, ed. U. Criscuolo (Naples 1990), §3 (p. 24, l. 80).

<sup>33</sup> Psellos, *Or. pan.* 1.92–97: Ἐδόκει πάλοι κατὰ κληρὸν προΐεναι ἢ τῆς εὐδαιμονίας καὶ δυσπραξίας πηγῆ, καὶ παῖδες πατέρων τὰ διάφορα τῆς τύχης δεχόμενοι ρεύματα εἰς νύκτους μετωχέτευον. ἀλλὰ σὺ πρῶτος τὴν κακίστην ταύτην σύγχεας διαίρεσον, καὶ τῷ τρόπῳ μᾶλλον ἢ τῷ γένει τὰ τῆς εὐτυχίας ταλαντεύσας ζυγά, τοὺς κλήρους ἡμῖν μετεκίνησας. I thank Marc Lauxtermann for improving my translation.

<sup>34</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.*, p. 430, l. 29–30, and 431, l. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.*, p. 430, l. 1–2.

<sup>36</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.*, p. 431, l. 12–13: οὐ συνήθειαν ἀλογον, ἀλλὰ κρίσιν εὐλογον τῶν περὶ τὰ βασιλεία ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐπεποίητο.



Psellos also defends this idea in a polemical pamphlet directed against people who accused him of using his literary and rhetorical talents with the intention of gaining power and wealth (*Or. min.* 9). Psellos assures them that his brilliant career (he is talking here about his promotion to *hypertimos*) is a logical and rational decision. The rewards came to him because he had shown himself the best in the preliminary selection procedures. Psellos emphasizes that he had made considerable and toilsome efforts to prove his worth in *hoi logoi*, which may mean that he proved his excellence by writing texts. There were apparently examinations (Psellos mentions a *κρίσις*) to distinguish the more able candidates from the rest. The rewards seem to come primarily in the form of honorific functions (*τιμαί* and *ἀξιώματα* are the words that Psellos uses).<sup>37</sup> In sum, Psellos advocates the idea that *hoi logoi* should function as a criterion for determining the division of honours and functions.

But to profit from this, one would have to provide proof of excellence in *hoi logoi*. Several sources refer to public tests or examinations. In Mauropous' *Neara*, concerning the appointment of the *nomophylax*, it is stipulated that Xiphilinos was chosen for this function, because he 'has demonstrated (*ἐπεδείξατο*) his learnedness in a way that was neither unclear nor undistinguished nor vague; on the contrary, he was publicly and clearly prominent in tests over these matters.'<sup>38</sup> The 'tests' mentioned here are said to have been organized in public. It is difficult to ascertain the exact nature of these examinations, but they are regarded as an indispensable element in the meritocratic (or pseudo-meritocratic) selection.

In a funeral oration for an anonymous patrician, a fellow student of his, Psellos deplores the fact that the deceased had not had the chance to gather the fruits of his education: 'Such was he, in his talent and in his diligence, that he seemed the best of all pupils of the school, so that he should be singled out for a better fate, carrying off, as a prize for the contest, an appointment as secretary in the palace.'<sup>39</sup> The

<sup>37</sup> Psellos, *Or. min.* 9.34 and 39.

<sup>38</sup> Ioannes Mauropous, *Novella constitutio saec. XI medii*, ed. A. Salac (Prague 1954), §8: ὅς οὐκ ἀφανῶς οὐδ' ἀσήμως οὐδ' ἀμυδρῶς ἐπεδείξατο τὴν ἑαυτοῦ πολυμάθειαν, ἀλλὰ δημοσίᾳ καὶ φανερώς ἐν αὐταῖς ταῖς τῶν πραγμάτων πείραις ἐξέλαμψεν.

<sup>39</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. Gautier*, 5.146–9: Τοιοῦτος ἦν ἐκεῖνος καὶ τὴν εὐφυΐαν καὶ τὴν σπουδὴν ὥστε καὶ ἄριστος ἀπάντων ἐν τῷ παιδευτηρίῳ ἀναφθῆναι καὶ κρεῖττονι ἐγκριθῆναι μοῖρα καὶ ἀθλον ἀγῶνος ἀποίσασθαι τὴν ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις γραφῆν. For

conditions for a successful career are here defined as talent (*εὐφύα*) and study (*σπουδή*). Psellos adds that the talents of his friend can still be admired in the literary works he has left behind; the letters he sent to Psellos are tellingly described as ‘tokens’ (l. 169: *γνωρίσματα*) of his rhetorical inspiration. We can see here the importance of textual production in the career of an ambitious young Constantinopolitan. Elsewhere too in the oration, success is seen as the reward for efforts made during study; Psellos speaks of the ‘prizes given according to one’s worth’.<sup>40</sup> The word *πόννοι* (efforts) is paramount in Psellos’ descriptions of how success is earned by literary education. Most often, the word is closely associated with diligent study (*μελέτη, σπουδή*). Psellos thus conveys the impression that the meritocratic model does not reward people haphazardly, or on the basis of obscure criteria. Hard work and talent are necessary preconditions. In all these texts, the ‘rewards’ assume the form of a career, first a job as secretary, and thereafter possibly even more brilliant offices.

### 5.3. DISPLAY

Between the world of education and the ‘real world’ of careers, there were various selection procedures and occasions for testing future candidates. The authorship of texts was naturally one of the best ways for these candidates to prove that they met the standards put in place by the leading intellectuals. This would imply that an important motivation for producing texts was display.

#### 5.3.1. Textual production and display

Psellos’ representation in the *Chronographia* of the onset of his own career highlights this aspect of display. As an insignificant secretary, Psellos at first did not have direct contact with the emperor. But his name was bandied about amongst the emperor’s entourage, because

the specific usage of *τὴν ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις γραφήν* as employment as a notary or secretary in the imperial chancellery, see Psellos, *Or. fun. Gautier*, p. 139, n. 47.

<sup>40</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. Gautier*, 5.221–2: τὰ τῶν πόνων γέρα ἐπιψηφισθῆ καὶ τὰ τῶν ἀγωνισμάτων ἔπαθλα πρὸς ἀξίαν ἐπιβραβευθῆ.

of the elegance (*χάρις*) and unaffectedness of his eloquence.<sup>41</sup> This eloquence ‘ran ahead of him’,<sup>42</sup> by which Psellos suggests that his reputation was circulating at court. He was formally introduced, and by virtue of his eloquence alone, he gained the emperor’s admiration, and (still according to Psellos) the most impressive result of this admiration was that he gained unlimited access (*εἴσοδος*) to the emperor and his intentions.<sup>43</sup> This story, although probably a distortion of the truth, suggests that display of eloquence was an essential element in building a reputation and gaining renown.

Many people were scrabbling for the attention of the powerful, each one of them using a different strategy. Surely an emperor like Monomachos was susceptible to the idea of rewarding the cunning and the clever. While describing the volatile character and exaggerated generosity of this emperor, Psellos reproaches him for indiscriminately giving away honorary functions to people who ‘embarrassed the man with their pressing entreaties, and people who let drop words adapted to the occasion so as to make him laugh’.<sup>44</sup> The famous episode in which Maria Skleraina rewards a secretary who made an allusion to a Homeric verse<sup>45</sup> may also point to the somewhat injudicious desire of the imperial family to appear as sponsors of culture. Whether there is a particularly malicious touch of irony present or not, the episode may serve as an example of the ease with which knowledge of poetry could lead to rewards, and how clever timing of display was regarded as a means of currying favour with rulers.

In the encomium for Mauropous, Psellos says that, among other qualities, Mauropous’ eloquence made him acquire a good reputation:<sup>46</sup> it literally ‘published him’ (*δημοσιεύω* is the verb used) and brought him to the attention of everyone. In his *Historia Syntomos*, Psellos praises the letters of Leo the Wise because they ‘contain a demonstration of his excellent education’.<sup>47</sup> And when discussing the

<sup>41</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VI, §44.

<sup>42</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VI, §45, l. 5–8: ἡ πρόδρομος χάρις τῆς γλώττης.

<sup>43</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VI, §46.

<sup>44</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VI, §29: οἷ τε φορτικώτερον καταδυσωπούντες τὸν ἄνδρα, καὶ οἱ πρὸς τὸν καιρὸν τι παραφθεγγάμενοι ὥστε ἐκείνον κινήσαι πρὸς γέλωτα.

<sup>45</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VI, §61.

<sup>46</sup> Psellos, *Or. pan.* 17.444–6.

<sup>47</sup> Psellos, *Historia Syntomos*, 100.17–19: ἐπιστολὰς εὐπαιδευσίας μὲν ἐχούσας ἐπίδειξιν.

extant texts written by the deceased metropolitan of Melitene, Psellos mentions that they were a proof (δείγμα) of his learning.<sup>48</sup>

Display of intellectual abilities began as early as at the school desk. In his encomium for Niketas, his former schoolmate, Psellos specifies that the training in rhetoric consisted of the study of existing texts as well as the creation of new texts (referred to as ‘giving birth’), which provided for many people a proof (πέτρα) of rhetorical skills.<sup>49</sup> Likewise, the anonymous patrician’s writings are called ‘tokens (γνωρίσματα) of rhetorical inspiration’.<sup>50</sup> The passage most clearly pointing to the existence of exams, as Ahrweiler noted,<sup>51</sup> is the funeral oration for Xiphilinos, when Psellos presents his progress in the palace as a result of his study of *hoi logoi*:

*I was tested and scrutinized about all kinds of discourses, about many judgements, and on the basis of improvised writings. This way I was pushed towards the entrance.*<sup>52</sup>

Psellos insists that these ‘tests’ were conducted frequently and included many writings. Not only written texts were important: improvisation was also part of the assessments that the candidate had to go through.

Here and there, in passages discussing the selection procedures, we hear of specialized judges. In a *basilikos logos* for Monomachos, Psellos urges the need for rhetorical accomplishments to be remunerated; he adds that Monomachos should not just reward anyone haphazardly:

*The writings should be tested by many ears, and whoever the supreme prize is given to, for him should the treasures of your empire be opened. You have, oh emperor, judges of words. You have indeed many of them,*

<sup>48</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. Gautier*, 1.45–46: δείγμα τοῦ λόγου οἱ ἐκείνου λόγοι.

<sup>49</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. Gautier*, 1.89–92.

<sup>50</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. Gautier*, 5.169: τῆς ῥητορικῆς ἐπιπνοίας γνωρίσματα.

<sup>51</sup> H. Ahrweiler, ‘Recherches sur la société byzantine au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle: nouvelles hiérarchies et nouvelles solidarités’, *TM* 6 (1976), 99–124, at 108, n. 32. Riedinger, ‘Quatre étapes’, 33–5 suggests that this passage points to exams in the Palace itself. Weiss, *Oströmische Beamte*, 21 and 108–9, is more sceptical about centrally organized exams.

<sup>52</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.*, 431.15–18: πολλάκις ἐξετασθεὶς καὶ βασιανθεὶς ἐπὶ παντὶ λόγῳ, ἐπὶ πολλαῖς κρίσεσιν, ἐπ’ αὐτοσχεδίῳ συγγράμμασιν, καὶ οὕτω συμπεισθεὶς πρὸς τὴν εἴσοδον.

*Muses I would even call them. They should judge my words; as for the others, let them carve up the lamb limb by limb.*<sup>53</sup>

In this passage, the rationality of the selection procedure becomes concrete: candidates for functions (and thus for imperial wealth) are being tested on the basis of their writings, in the presence of ‘judges over words’ (*κριταὶ τῶν λόγων*), who must have been at the summit of the intellectual elite (Psellos, as we can infer from the entire oration, was at this moment still climbing the ladder).

As George Dennis remarked, imperial panegyric provided an ideal opportunity to impress a jury with tokens of dazzling rhetoric and vast knowledge.<sup>54</sup> Speeches before the emperor seem to have constituted an important testing ground. Psellos’ sixth oration makes mention of his own pupils, recommended for their knowledge of rhetoric (*Or. pan.* 6.261–92); it is probable they were about to give a speech themselves. These encomiastic orations in front of the emperor would indeed be an ideal testing ground for new applicants: they are showcases of rhetoric, in which young talents could prove their technical mastery and their loyalty to imperial ideology. From twelfth-century sources, we know about the so-called Epiphany orations, during which prospective candidates pronounced orations for the emperor.

Consequently, display can be seen as an important motive behind textual production. No matter what other intentions texts may have had, the idea was always present that a text displayed the personal abilities of the author and was decisive for his reputation. We have already remarked above (89–90), that poems were read by fellow specialists, with the intention of assessing the poem by its formal (linguistic or rhetorical) qualities. Taking the risk of exposing texts to the judgement of others was a necessary step forward. One had to enter the arena and make sure to attract attention.

<sup>53</sup> Psellos, *Or. pan.* 2, 826–8: ἀλλὰ δοκιμαζέσθωσαν τὰ συγγράμματα ὑπὸ πολλαῖς ἀκοαῖς, καὶ ὅτω ἂν δοθῇ τὸ ἐξαίρετον ἐκείνω οἱ τῆς σῆς βασιλείας θησαυροὶ ἀνοιγέσθωσαν. Ἐχεις, ὦ βασιλεῦ, κριτὰς λόγων. πολλοὺς, μούσας αὐτόχρημα, οἳ τοὶ κρινέτωσαν τὰ ἡμέτερα, οἱ δ’ ἄλλοι τὸν ἄρνα καθ’ ἄρμόν διαιρείτωσαν.

<sup>54</sup> G. T. Dennis, ‘Imperial Panegyric: Rhetoric and Reality’, in: H. Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204* (Washington DC 1997), 131–40, especially 137.

### 5.3.2. A poem for a job

In some poems addressed to emperors, we can see clearly the link between the desire to display skills and the prospect of concrete social advantage in the form of a promotion within the palace administration. The remarkable and brilliant career of Michael Psellos, for instance, seems to have begun with a poem. This is poem 16, an application poem as it were, addressed to the emperor, fishing for the humble job of secretary (*νοτάριος*). We know also from Psellos' account that this was his first job,<sup>55</sup> the poem is therefore probably addressed to Michael IV.<sup>56</sup>

The argument of the poem (17 verses long) goes along the following lines: up until now, Psellos has lived a life devoted to study, but at this moment, Michael's empire seems to have survived a serious threat. Therefore, Psellos wishes him an unhindered rule, and asks him to accept this poem as a gift and to give in exchange an appointment as one of his secretaries.

The first six lines of the poem sketch Psellos' personal background:

Ἐμοί, κραταιῆ φωσφόρε στεφηφόρε,  
 μέλημα καὶ σπούδασμα καὶ βίος λόγοι,  
 ἐξ ὧν φανῆναι καὶ προκόψειν ἐλπίσας  
 πάντων κατεφρόνησα καὶ ζῆν εἰλόμην  
 τέως ταπεινὸν καὶ κεκρυμμένον βίον,  
 πόνοις ὀμιλῶν καὶ σοφῶν βίβλοισ μόνον. 5

*Dear mighty and light-bearing emperor,  
 Hoi logoi are my care, my concern, my life.  
 Hoping through them [sc. hoi logoi] to be conspicuous, and to have success,  
 I neglected all other things and chose until now  
 to lead a humble and concealed life, 5  
 in company only with the labours and books of scholars.*

The rational meritocratic model that Psellos so painstakingly develops in other writings also appears here. He goes to great lengths to underscore the investments he has made. The devotion to learning is

<sup>55</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book IV, §38. See also Psellos, *Or. min.* 11 and 12.

<sup>56</sup> Westerink, *Poemata*, 238; J. Ljubarskij, *Ličnost' i tvorčestvo* (Moscow 1978), gr. trans. A. Tzelesi, *Η προσωπικότητα και το έργο του Μιχαήλ Ψελλού* (Athens 2004), 45, n. 13. Riedinger, 'Quatre étapes', 35–6 suggests that Konstantinos IX Monomachos was the addressee.

represented as a toilsome way of life. Moreover, this life was ‘concealed’: this entails that Psellos had to hide his ambitions and refrain from establishing connections and progressing on a social level. Withdrawn from real life, he contemplated books of ancient wise men. Study, isolated and not directly applicable, is presented as a costly personal offer. This poem responds to the expectation that study, and the efforts to make progress in it, are indispensable for social promotion; they are the price that needs to be paid. In this way, no intruders could reap the fruits without the prescribed *rite de passage* of study.

What Psellos expected to result from his studies is stated in two telling verbs: *φανῆναι καὶ προκόψειν* (v. 3), that is, ‘to attract attention and be successful’. The first step (*φανῆναι*) entails the display of literary skills, so laboriously acquired: Psellos hopes to stand out from the rest. The second step (*προκόψειν*) is the development of a successful career. It seems to be taken for granted that success follows upon display.

Psellos then proclaims his commitment of loyalty to the emperor, now that a danger has almost ruined the empire. This could refer to several uprisings and rebellions taking place in early 1040.<sup>57</sup> This is in line with a familiar tendency of Psellos to portray himself as a ‘pure’ philosopher, who only out of necessity takes up his responsibilities to occupy himself with ‘earthly’ political matters. The ultimate aim, of course, is social promotion: the poem concludes bluntly by stating that the gift of this poem is expected to be recompensed with the job of secretary.

As to the reasons why Psellos clothed his application in a poetic form, we need again to take into account the process of display, a process about which the poem itself is clear. Elizabeth Jeffreys has suggested that verse writing in the twelfth century was to a large degree motivated by the desire to demonstrate that one was a ‘credible member of the guild of *literati*’.<sup>58</sup> A similar motivation for writing poetry can be observed in eleventh-century poetry. The

<sup>57</sup> Westerink, *Poemata*, 238 suggests the insurgence of the Bulgars in the same year. There were several important uprisings and rebellions in 1040, see J.-C. Cheynet, *Pouvoirs et contestations à Byzance (963–1210)* (Paris 1990), 50–2.

<sup>58</sup> E. Jeffreys, ‘Why Produce Verse in Twelfth-century Constantinople?’, in: P. Odorico, M. Hinterberger, and P. Agapitos (eds), «*Doux remède . . .*» *Poésie et poésie à Byzance. Actes du IVe colloque international philologique, Paris, 23–24–25 février 2006* (Paris 2008), 219–28, at 221.

efforts put into study are exemplified by the correct handling of metre and prosody, of grammar and rhetoric. The metrical and prosodical constraints required great technical skill, which, perhaps unlike prose, could be demonstrated in a compact text. Psellos 16 is a *Meisterstück*, showing the result of long and painful studies.

### 5.3.3. Insects and fruit: epideictic pieces

Mostly, these expectations were at work rather invisibly. But there are also a few poems in which *epideixis* seems to be the dominating factor, because their content is deliberately trifling to the point of being irrelevant. This indicates that the poet wanted them to be considered as pure showcases.

Clear candidates for such a qualification are the poems on insects by Christophoros. He composed a long poem (111 verses) on the spider (122), and a very short one (four verses) on the ant (125). In both of these poems Christophoros stresses the ordinariness and pettiness of these animals. The spider is repeatedly characterized as a ‘trivial creature’,<sup>59</sup> and the ant as altogether a ‘small animal’.<sup>60</sup> In the encomium on the spider, this aspect is part of a particular argument: Christophoros states that he cannot praise the wonderful works of the Creator in a fitting way; the best thing he can do is to start composing his praises with a creature that seems insignificant in comparison with other creatures (vv. 13–21). He repeats this alleged motivation at the end of the poem: even in the case of this small animal, the forces of the rhetor fail to do justice (vv. 105–11). The argument then goes that even this trifling creature and the things it makes are a marvel to behold. The poem on the ant also takes the smallness of the animal as its main subject: the small body of the ant is juxtaposed to its great mind. Both poems ultimately aim to celebrate the greatness of Creation.

However, it is precisely the banality of the subject that highlights the poet’s (or the rhetor’s) achievement. Christophoros may here be influenced by the ancient tradition of encomia on insects (notably Lucian’s encomium on the fly). This tradition is also continued in some curious orations of Michael Psellos (*Or. min.* 27–9), on the flea,

<sup>59</sup> Christophoros 122.17: ἐντελοῦς . . . πλάσματος.

<sup>60</sup> Christophoros 125.1: τὸ βραχὺ ζῶον.



the louse, and the bedbug. Psellos is explicit about the motivations that induced him to write these pieces: he declares in his encomium on the louse (*Or. min.* 28) that he is not so mad as to seriously write an encomium on the louse, but that it is meant to ‘show the power of *logos*’,<sup>61</sup> so that his pupils have an example to look at. The sheer banality of the subject, according to Psellos, should make the students aware that this encomium only serves as a demonstration. In sum, these pieces are preparatory exercises, to show off; and Psellos may here very well have voiced what Christophoros concealed under a layer of fairly transparent modesty.

Moreover, the great difference in length between Christophoros’ two poems is no doubt designed to highlight his skills, proving that he can handle the techniques of both *brevitas* and *copia*. In a remark on perceived verbosity in Christophoros’ poems, Crimi links this aspect to the requirements of *varietas* and virtuosity that were so important in Christophoros’ cultural environment.<sup>62</sup>

Christophoros’ poems 87 and 88 are also to be considered as studies in rhetoric. They are a perfect example of the exercise of *anaskēue* and *kataskēue*, one of the established *progymnasmata*. They also follow the pattern of a rhetorical *chreia*.<sup>63</sup> In poem 87, a friend is rebuked because he has sent grapes from the countryside; the poet asks for figs instead, and gives an intricate argument, based on Bible quotations, as to why figs are superior to grapes. In poem 88, exactly the opposite argument is expressed. The two poems, both numbering 16 verses, perfectly mirror each other. It is no coincidence that plants (or fruits) should be compared here: trees and plants are a popular subject for the sophistic exercise of *synkrisis* from Antiquity onwards.<sup>64</sup> In the eleventh century, Doxapatres composed a comparison between the olive tree and the vine.<sup>65</sup> Christophoros arguably builds on this purely rhetorical tradition.

It should not, of course, wholly surprise us that *rhetorical* skills are demonstrated here, nor that Christophoros, in his poem on the

<sup>61</sup> Psellos, *Or. min.* 28.121–2: ὑμῖν ἐνδείξασθαι ὅσα ὁ λόγος δεδόνηται.

<sup>62</sup> Crimi, *Canzoniere*, 36.

<sup>63</sup> O. Schissel, ‘Interpretationen zu Christophoros Mitylenaios’, *BZ* 29 (1930), 161–7, at 165–6.

<sup>64</sup> H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner* (Munich 1978), I, 106–8.

<sup>65</sup> Ioannes Doxapatres, *Commentarii in Aphthonii progymnasmata*, ed. C. Walz, in: *Rhetores Graeci* (Stuttgart 1832–6), II, 81–564, at 491–2.

spider, compares his encomiastic enterprise to the work of rhetors or sophists (122.106–7). In line with our observations above (43–6), poets saw themselves primarily as rhetors, and their poems as rhetorical achievements.

#### 5.4. SHAPING AN ELITE

As elsewhere in Byzantine history, the intellectual elite in the eleventh century was ‘a group exclusive in its possession of esoteric knowledge, and yet submissive and impotent in the face of the mighty’.<sup>66</sup> But, at least for a short period of time, a group of intellectuals accumulated political power and influence on the basis of their intellectual precedence, and managed to impose their will on the emperors. Intellectual elite and social elite coincided to at least some degree. Most of our intellectuals undeniably occupied a privileged position. Hence, it is no wonder that our poets were supportive of the existing situation, from which they had profited so much: they wanted the elite to remain in place as such.<sup>67</sup> Consequently, each member of the elite saw themselves confronted with the task of maintaining their credentials and upholding the standards that divided them from the non-elite. Through their literature, they sought to construct and defend models of conformity.<sup>68</sup>

##### 5.4.1. Distinction

The members of the elite had every interest in keeping their own class as limited as possible. It had to remain an elite: that is, a closed class not accessible to everyone. Our poets saw dangers everywhere: rivals,

<sup>66</sup> I. Ševčenko, ‘Society and Intellectual Life in the Fourteenth Century’, in: *Actes du XIVe Congrès international des Etudes byzantines* (Bucharest 1974), I, 69–92, at 71.

<sup>67</sup> See also H.-G. Beck, *Das literarische Schaffen der Byzantiner. Wege zu seinem Verständnis* (Vienna 1974), 25.

<sup>68</sup> See D. Smythe, ‘Outsiders by Taxis: Perceptions of Non-Conformity in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Literature’, in: L. Garland (ed.), *Conformity and Non-Conformity in Byzantium* (Amsterdam 1997), 229–49, at 240–1 on the role of literature creating social dividing lines. However, I do not agree with the view that the socially upward were non-conformists, nor that Psellos can be defined as an ‘outsider’ for his whole career.

slanderers, flatterers, not to mention newcomers like themselves. It is therefore no surprise that authors and poets, by definition nearly all of them belonging to the cultural elite, often displayed a certain ‘snobbery’ in their writings: an artificial feeling of superiority, by which the parvenu (for he was often precisely that) tried to secure the degree of distinction he had just, laboriously, attained.<sup>69</sup>

Fundamental to the formation of an elite is the propagation of the idea of distinction. This distinction is expressed in various cultural parameters. Not only did the formal requirement of education function as a means of division, but so too did less easily perceptible personal properties: social behaviour, external appearance, and conversational skills. Various rules and codes, sometimes kept as arcane as possible, constituted the criteria for being perceived as a credible member of the elite.

Membership of the class is marked out by the prerogative of being called a *logios*. Contemporary expressions for it are, for example, ‘to be conspicuous in the list of wise’ (applied to Mauropous),<sup>70</sup> or ‘shining among the wise’, used (sarcastically) by Christophoros.<sup>71</sup> The idea of a list frequently occurs in Psellos’ letters, for instance in one to *caesar* Doukas: thanks to the *caesar*’s appreciation of his qualities, Psellos feels he can be ‘numbered in the list of learned people’.<sup>72</sup> But within this ‘list’ of *logioi*, there was also a hierarchy; thus Mauropous is called in the poem by his secretary ‘the best among all men who bring offerings to *hoi logoi*’.<sup>73</sup> Likewise, Psellos says about himself that, thanks to the praises of a friend, he ‘was believed to prevail over everyone in *logoi*’.<sup>74</sup> When he receives a prestigious title (consul of philosophers?), he says to a critical Xiphilinos that this title makes official the already existing situation that Psellos ‘presided over *hoi logoi*’.<sup>75</sup> Clearly, the intellectual elite was a hierarchically organized social space in the mind of contemporary Byzantines.

<sup>69</sup> P. Magdalino, ‘Byzantine Snobbery’, in: M. Angold (ed.), *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries* (Oxford 1984), 58–78.

<sup>70</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. in Leich.* 393.29: ἐμπρέπει . . . ἐν σοφῶν καταλόγῳ.

<sup>71</sup> Christophoros 40.24: λαμπρὸς ἐν σοφωτάτοις.

<sup>72</sup> Psellos, *Ep. K-D* 231, p. 276, l. 5: νῦν . . . δοκῶ . . . ἐν τῷ καταλόγῳ τῶν λογίων σσηριθμηθῆσθαι.

<sup>73</sup> Hesaias’ poem, v. 28: πάντων κατ’ ἀνδρῶν τῶν θύοντων τοῖς λόγοις.

<sup>74</sup> E. Maltese, ‘Epistole inedite di Michele Psello. I’, *Studi italiani di filologia classica* III.5 (1987), 82–98, letter 3, l. 39–40: πάντων ἀνθρώπων ἐν λόγοις ἄρχην πεπίστευμαι.

<sup>75</sup> E. Maltese, ‘Epistole inedite di Michele Psello. II’, *Studi italiani di filologia classica* III.5 (1987), 214–23, letter 7, l. 31–4; see the phrase τὸ προεδρεύειν ἡμᾶς ἐν

Our poets actively propagate the idea that functionaries and people of standing should be educated men like themselves. Boorishness is a sign not only of intellectual inferiority but also of social inferiority. Christophoros' poetry in particular is permeated by the idea that certain professions and positions in society require educational standards. Ignorance, credulity, and boorishness incited his indignation time and again. Instances of these are seen as hostile intrusions that are both culturally and morally dangerous.

Poem 1 may serve as an example of Christophoros' aversion towards boorishness. This poem describes a disastrous stampede at the feast of St Thomas, for which we have no other historical sources. Christophoros focuses on one particular event in a church: while the people were singing psalms, someone, as far as we can see, created chaos by behaving in a disorderly fashion (vv. 29–35). This is the relevant passage:

ἀγράμματος δὲ πανθεώτης τις γέρων  
 ῥαβδοῦχος ἦν ὄπισθεν ἐκβοῶν μέγα, 30  
 καὶ πεζολεκτῶν ὡς ἄπειρος γραμμάτων  
 ἔφασκεν αὐτοῖς· «ὡς κελεύετε, ψίχα.»  
 οὗτοι δὲ τοῦτο συχρὸν ἠνωτισμένοι  
 ἔφευγον εὐθὺς τοῦ μέλους λελησμένοι  
 καὶ συντριβὴν κλαίουσι τῶν μελῶν ἔτι. 35

*At the back, there was an old man, an uneducated pantheotes,<sup>76</sup>  
 who was carrying a stick, and yelling out loud. 30  
 speaking in a pedestrian way as someone unacquainted with letters,  
 he kept saying to them: 'Please, a crumb!'  
 The people, after repeatedly hearing this,  
 ran away at once, forgetful of the song (melos)  
 but still they bemoan the crushing of their legs (melos). 35*

It is difficult to understand precisely the train of events, but apparently, people began the stampede upon hearing the *pantheotes*

λόγοις. See also Riedinger, 'Quatre étapes', 150, who does not believe that this refers to the *hypatos ton philosophon* function, but in this kind of text, titlature is never very precise (Psellos may have used the term *proedros*, more or less metaphorically, to refer to a function officially called *hypatos*).

<sup>76</sup> A *pantheotes* was a minor functionary belonging to the service of the palace; see N. Oikonomides, 'L'évolution de l'organisation administrative de l'empire byzantin au XIe siècle (1025–1118)', *TM* 6 (1976), 125–52, here 129. See also Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, §75.

begging for bread; there is perhaps a shocking aspect here that totally eludes us. Christophoros lays great emphasis on the fact that the man was an uneducated boor, and in fact makes a direct connection between this vulgar shout and the panic among the people. The verb used for this shout is *πεζολεκτέω*. This word, seldom used, literally means ‘speaking (or writing) in prose’, mostly used in a neutral sense.<sup>77</sup> In this poem, however, a negative connotation is evident: it is directly connected with the expression ‘as someone unacquainted with letters’. Christophoros deduces the rudeness of this person from his ‘pedestrian’ way of talking, which here creates chaos. His illiteracy is a sign of his irresponsibility and morally deprived nature.

In a similar fashion Christophoros complains in poem 63 about ordinary people performing the function of priest and deacon. He explicitly mentions a string of professions: rag-and-bone men, sailors, bakers, innkeepers, carpenters, cooks, etc. This leads to situations, comically described by the poet, where these priests cannot properly pronounce the words required for the service, and fall back on the jargon of their profession. Literacy is here directly linked to the credibility one had to possess in order to fulfil certain roles in society. The poem also shows the contempt towards the common folk that existed among the elite.

The problem of an improper assumption of a position, but this time in the intellectual elite, is the subject of poem 40. Christophoros upbraids an ordinary man, an *idiotes* (cf. the title), for claiming the right to judge and compare writings of ancient authors. The would-be intellectual is debunked—primarily, as it seems (the text is severely damaged), because he had not yet gone through the whole necessary process of education and consecration by his peers. Christophoros advises him to do things in order, and to respect the hierarchy (using a comparison with the hierarchy in the navy); he advises him: ‘do not run from the oars to the platform’ (v. 14). In sum, he lacked the education needed to be entitled to the position in the intellectual field that he coveted. He is a usurper, an unlawful intruder into the elite, who should be kept at bay. The position (‘the throne’) that this intruder aimed at is described as an attractive one. Christophoros

<sup>77</sup> Apart from a few other occurrences, the word also appears in the begging poem from *Athen.* 1040, v. 58, see A. Karpozilos, *Συμβολή στη μελέτη του βίου και του έργου του Ιωάννη Μαυρόποδος* (Ioannina 1982), 72.

presents us in this context the image of the typical successful intellectual: he occupies a throne, high and aloof (v. 22), and he is admired and popular (vv. 24–8). From verse 29, Christophoros addresses the city of Constantinople, lamenting the boorishness (*ἀγροικία*) that is introduced by such people and that now endangers the city. The city itself, with all its overtones of intellectual refinement, is becoming victim of countryside manners. In a short personification of *ἀγροικία*, which threatens to conquer the city, the poet states that it ‘accuses knowledge and literary culture (*gnosis* and *hoi logoi*) of being nothing good’. This may be implicitly directed against hostile voices that questioned the relevance of education.

This leads the poet to bemoan the fate of the intellectuals, a group that he subsumes under the designation ‘we, friends of *hoi logoi*’ (v. 44: *ἡμᾶς τοῦς λόγων φίλους*). Therefore, Christophoros feels that it is necessary to restate the preconditions for participating in intellectual life. He names three necessary requirements for gaining entrance to the group of persons authorized to pronounce literary judgements. From the scraps of text that remain, we can discern the familiar pair of talent (v. 58: *εὐφυσὴ φύσις*) and study (v. 60: *ἐντελεῖ γνῶσις*). The intellectual must ‘cling to many books’ (v. 64). The poet closes with the following advice: ‘you need time, effort, and an oil lamp’ (v. 75: *χρεία χρόνου σοὶ καὶ κόπου καὶ λυχνίας*).

The overall message is that one cannot simply assume the role of an intellectual: this status is defined by standards of education, and needs to be certified. This proof—study and composition of works—requires a certain amount of effort and devotion, so that even at night one must be prepared to work for it. This last aspect is hinted at by the oil lamp. In sum, assuming the position of an intellectual requires an investment, just as Psellos in poem 16 emphasized the investments he had made to lead a life devoted to *hoi logoi*.

Christophoros’ perspective is typical for the position he occupies: when education and study are held up as necessary preconditions for participation in intellectual life and enjoyment of the social promotions attached to it, the people who belong to the group have to assert themselves as such, and guard against people who have an eye to a similar role without being willing to invest the same time, energy, and money in education. Vertical mobility creates opportunities, but should be held in check by those claiming a more authoritative position.

A similar elitist stance can be observed in a poem of Mauroπους directed against ‘someone who is suddenly honoured’ (poem 66). It is a mildly ironic piece, censuring the swiftness by which someone is promoted from secretary (1: *μυστογράφος*) to tax collector (2: *ἐξάκτωρ*). This gives reason to lament the transitoriness of earthly values: ‘Such are all mortal and transient things; a shadow that cannot be kept by the hands that hold it.’<sup>78</sup> As with Christophoros’ complaints about priests and deacons who come from nothing, so is this piece a reflection of the quickly changing social balance, and the reaction of the established members of the elite, keen to preserve their status. Similar reactions are quite common in eleventh-century literature: another instructive example is a text by Michael Psellos directed to an innkeeper who strives to be a philosopher (*Or. min.* 13).

This is ‘snobbery’ in its purest form; that is, the explicit expression of social superiority from people who do not have enough authority to make this superiority implicitly clear.<sup>79</sup> And this is indeed what we witness here: insecurity about acquired social status makes these poets adopt a disparaging view about the vertical mobility they see around them. They try to defend their own position by putting up barriers such as education, and, as we will see, also less readily visible boundaries of desirable behaviour.

But apart from warding off intruders, they also saw themselves constrained to reconfirm their own preparedness to devote themselves to the ideal of *hoi logoi*. Christophoros emphasizes this devotion to *hoi logoi* in several poems that at first sight seem to be innocent anecdotes. One of them is the poem on an owl hooting and keeping him awake (poem 131). The poem is very mutilated. Christophoros begins by apostrophizing the owl, wishing him a long life. It seems that Christophoros had sought assistance from other men and animals to wake him at fixed times, but without success. Now, however, he has an owl that renders him this service, a bird traditionally associated with wisdom (see v. 9). The address to the owl, wishing it good health (v. 11), can be interpreted as the ironic counterpart to what one is expected to shout at an owl hooting in the night. In this case, the owl brings wisdom because he keeps

<sup>78</sup> Mauroπους 66.10–11: *τοιούτῳν ἔστι πᾶν τὸ θνητὸν καὶ ῥέον//σκιὰ κρατούσας  
χερσῶν οὐ κρατουμένη.*

<sup>79</sup> Magdalino, ‘Snobbery’.

Christophoros awake. In this way, he can dedicate himself at night to his books and studies: the bird makes him 'alert and eager for efforts' (v. 13). He will gather knowledge from being awake (v. 51: ἀγρυπνίας).

This notion of ἀγρυπνία (wakefulness) had already appeared in poem 40, when Christophoros mentioned the oil lamp as a prerequisite for sound intellectual work. In a funeral poem for a friend, Mauropous had praised his nightly prayers.<sup>80</sup> Both in the Hellenistic tradition and in asceticism, ἀγρυπνία is seen as a desirable ideal.<sup>81</sup> It underlines the continuous and effortful commitment to *hoi logoi*.

Similar self-representative elements appear in Mauropous' poem on his house when he was forced to abandon it (poem 47). Mauropous paints a picture of toil, vigilance, and devotion to books. He endures long labours (πόννοι) and spends entire nights vigilant (ἀγρύπνουσ).<sup>82</sup> He merges with his books (v. 28). The book, as the embodiment of the immaterial *logoi*, is indeed the only material object to which one can be devoted and show reverence.<sup>83</sup>

Christophoros' poem on the mice that invade his house (poem 103) also confirms his self-image as a devoted intellectual. At v. 48, he relates that the mice 'eat his papers and books'; the next verse, almost obliterated now, by way of fulfilment of Christophoros' unwitting prophecy, shows at the end only the word λόγων, undoubtedly forming part of a further reference to his literary activities disturbed by the vile rodents. Subtly, again by the indirect means of portraying the nuisance caused by an animal, Christophoros introduces his possession of books and his attachment to *hoi logoi*.

#### 5.4.2. Forging friendships

The forces active in shaping and maintaining social distinctions are not only negative ones: members of the elite also strove to establish

<sup>80</sup> Mauropous 36.26: νύκτωρ διαθλῶν ἐν προσευχαῖς ἀγρύπνοις.

<sup>81</sup> See also Crimi, *Canzoniere*, 37.

<sup>82</sup> Mauropous 47.22–3: ἐν σοὶ πόνουσ ἤνεγκα μακροὺσ καὶ κόπουσ, // ἐν σοὶ διῆξα νύκτασ ἀγρύπνουσ ὄλασ.

<sup>83</sup> See G. Cavallo, 'Libri in scena', in: E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies, vol. 1. Plenary Papers* (Aldershot 2006), 345–64; Bianconi, 'Et le livre s'est fait poésie'. On Mauropous' attachment to books (considered together with *logoi* as a very broad concept): G. Cortassa, 'I libri di Giovanni Mauropode', *Quaderni del Dipartimento di Filologia, Linguistica e Tradizione classica* 6 (2007), 139–75 (on this passage: 149–50).



solidarity with others. This solidarity could take only one form in this social and cultural context: that of intellectual *philia*.<sup>84</sup> This intellectual friendship gave people something to identify with: in sharing the exclusive ideals of their intellectual elite, these ideals became something to believe in, to defend against the common enemy found in *ἀγροικία*. It provided cohesion for this elite of people who had, apart from their shared education, nothing in common. It is surely no accident that friendships were already formed at school, where young boys could create common behavioural patterns. Friendship also permitted them to exchange various services: mediations, introductions, and information. Hence, notwithstanding the highly charged emotional discourse of friendship, many of these relationships were primarily instrumental, and many of them were also unequal: one partner was clearly dependent on the other, even if they called each other ‘friends’.<sup>85</sup>

Intellectual *philia* is perceived and described by our authors as a distinctive form of friendship, different from other kinds. As such, it functions as an important expression of social identification in this period.<sup>86</sup> In a funeral oration for Anastasios, a pupil of his, Psellos claims that their friendship was created by their shared love for learning.<sup>87</sup> This is only reinforced, Psellos states, by their shared manners. He underlines the immaterial and authentic aspects of their friendship. It was not carousals, games, or sport that formed the basis and subject of their friendship, but the Muses, learning, and other beautiful things.<sup>88</sup> In a letter to another friend, Psellos chastises his correspondent because he neglects the values of *hoi logoi*: he leans toward material values, whereas he should know that *hoi logoi* provide the real wealth and should be honoured.<sup>89</sup> It is typical of the

<sup>84</sup> On intellectual *philia* in our period, including its instrumental nature, see E. Limousin, ‘Lettrés en société: «filos bios» ou «politikos bios»?’, *Byz* 69 (1999), 344–65. On the phenomenon in Psellos’ letters, cf. F. Tinnefeld, ‘Freundschaft in den Briefen des Michael Psellos: Theorie und Wirklichkeit’, *JÖB* 22 (1973), 151–68; Ljubarskij, *Προσωπικότητα και έργο*, 178–9.

<sup>85</sup> See M. Mullett, ‘Byzantium: A Friendly Society?’, *Past and Present* 118 (1988), 3–24.

<sup>86</sup> Ahrweiler, ‘Hiérarchies et solidarités’.

<sup>87</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. Gautier*, 2.27–30. Probably this Anastasios is Anastasios Lizix: see the convincing arguments adduced by Gautier at Psellos, *Or. fun. Gautier*, p. 86–90.

<sup>88</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. Gautier*, 2.25–6: *Μουσών και λόγων και τής άλλης χάριτος*.

<sup>89</sup> Psellos, *Ep. Sathas* 11. See also E. De Vries-van der Velden, ‘Les amitiés dangereuses: Psellos et Léon Paraspondylos’, *BSI* 60 (1999), 315–50, esp. 342–5, who suggests that this letter is written to Leon Paraspondylos.

bookishness of this elite that Psellos even avers that letters, as written documents, are worth more than a live conversation. The friend is called to order and urged to send him a letter back; that is, he should again subscribe to the intellectual values of friendship that were so important for the self-definition of this elite. In Psellos' letters, there are dozens of such statements, definitions and reminders of a commendable, spiritual, and intellectual friendship. Several typical motifs all form part of the discourse of intellectual *philia*: the praise of the correspondent's beautiful words, the urge to write more letters, the image of the 'other self', etc.

Letters are, of course, the medium par excellence in which to celebrate this intellectualized kind of friendship, but it is also present in some poems of Christophoros that assume the form and occasional context of letters. Many of these short poems (which are almost all only partially transmitted) dwell on the motif of gently chastising a friend for not writing more. In poem 4, Christophoros lays a conventional accusation at the door of a certain monk Mourzoul: Σιγᾶς; In poem 100, he begs his friend Niketas to write him some more words. It is one of the most intense professions of the spiritual ideal of *hoi logoi*: words are the food by which Christophoros survives, he says, and if Niketas keeps silent, he will starve his friend Christophoros. Poem 27 is likewise a lengthy request to send Christophoros more words. Other poems use the conceit of the 'gift of words', which Christophoros presents as more valuable than any other gift (see below, 330–3).

The same concern about friendship is visible in some addresses to friends that one could call 'dedications', although there was no symbolic system of dedications as they exist in other cultures.<sup>90</sup> The only 'dedications' of poems are to be found in Psellos 9, the poem on medicine, and Mauropous 1, the introductory poem to his collection. Psellos' address to his friends comes rather unexpectedly between a mass of didactic instructions on the diagnosis of urines (vv. 529–38). The poet asserts that he intends with this poem to whet the appetite of his friends (ἀνδράσι φίλοις), who are identified as grammaticians, rhetors, and philosophers; in sum, intellectuals active in education.

<sup>90</sup> Psellos 29, addressed to friends of the poet, is unlikely to have been written by Psellos: the family names that are mentioned do not accord with Psellos' known acquaintances. Moreover, the ascriptions in this manuscript (*Vat. gr.* 672) are far from trustworthy.

Psellos aligns himself here with this intellectual group, showing his specialization in an area that is unfamiliar to them.

Mauropous includes a dedication to his friends in poem 1, where he announces the intentions of his collection. Mauropous says that he offers this collection to his friends, as a small taste of a more abundant bouquet of literary works. The poem stresses that he has done away with lofty ambitions. The address for his friends is a means of distancing himself from his earlier custom of addressing his poems primarily to emperors. Mauropous' friends (addressed as such at v. 32) are expressly identified as friends of *hoi logoi* (v. 28). Just as in Psellos' poem, the intellectuals are singled out as the audience of the poem. And this is indeed how we need to understand these 'dedications': not as dedications to specific persons, but as a token that Mauropous' and Psellos' poetry is to be read by intellectuals like themselves. It is telling that Mauropous addresses first 'friends of *hoi logoi*', and only after this addresses them with the term *philoï*. It is the first address that carries the most meaning: it is not one or the other group of historical friends of Mauropous that is meant, but a non-specific public of knowledgeable readers. In this way, their poetry is situated in the realm of the intellectual elite, and at the same time, the actual readers of their poetry would feel part of a privileged audience.

Actual friends of Mauropous play a prominent role elsewhere in the collection, notably in the series of epitaphs for friends (poems 35–9). Mauropous makes it clear that these poems are written from the standpoint of a friend, not as public pieces (see above, 101). Poem 35, for Michael the deacon, closes with an affectionate address. The friend is called 'the light of my eyes', and is asked to enlighten 'his Ioannes'. These are typical addresses for friends, and the possessive pronoun combined with the forename particularly indicates a certain intimacy. In poem 37, for Ioannes the *chartophylax*, Mauropous again mentions his own name (v. 4). Towards the end of the poem, he provides more details about their friendship: they were ancient classmates, and they have lived together and 'breathed together' throughout their life (vv. 42–3). Ioannes is 'the care of my soul, the light of my eyes', the latter a literal repetition of the final address in poem 35. Mauropous asserts that he grieves for himself as much as for his friend, because there is nothing left to hope for, now that he is bereft of such an excellent friend. In all these poems, as we will see shortly, the friends are portrayed as refined gentlemen, well versed in *hoi logoi*. Hence, their friendship is not just a friendship: it is an

intellectual *philia*. The reference to shared studies in poem 37 reinforces this aspect. These friends cannot be linked decisively to persons known from other sources, as far as I can ascertain. They are clearly part of Mauropous' strictly personal network.

Someone who was certainly part of his network was Michael Psellos. Their friendship is one of the most famous in Byzantium, and it is not far-fetched to say that Mauropous' high-placed connections were due to his friendship with his former pupil. As this relationship does not play a particular role in their poetry (it plays a much larger role in their letters), I will not explore this aspect here.

Almost all the figures known to us to some degree, particularly people active in the intellectual domain, can be identified as acquaintances of Psellos. Psellos' network extended over several generations, several classes, and different ranks of people, from emperors, through military commanders, to monks. Out of all the people we might expect, however, there is one who is conspicuously absent: Christophoros Mitylenaios is nowhere mentioned, nowhere addressed. Conversely, there is no trace of Psellos nor of Mauropous in the entire poetry collection of Christophoros.<sup>91</sup> This is surprising, to say the least. Christophoros was born and lived in Constantinople during the same period, and also moved in court circles; poems 18, 19, and 24, addressed to Michael IV, testify to this, as do poems 54 and 55, addressed to Konstantinos Monomachos (probably also poem 70 for Maria Skleraina).<sup>92</sup> Christophoros also composed a poem for Michael Keroularios' enthronement as a patriarch (poem 61), and was connected to other high-ranking functionaries, such as a *parathalassites* Melias (poems 15–16), and the city eparch Ioannes Amoudas (poem 30). Christophoros may not have been as close to imperial power as Psellos and Mauropous, but he was well connected and circulated in the upper echelons of the Constantinopolitan elite. It is clear that our three poets must have known each other.

We are left with conjectures only to explain this remarkable reticence. Is it possible, for instance, that we have to search the reason in Christophoros' adherence to the party of Georgios Maniakes?

<sup>91</sup> According to F. Lauritzen, 'Christopher of Mytilene's Parody of the Haughty Mauropous', *BZ* 100 (2007), 125–32, Ioannes Hypsinous, the person for whom Christophoros wrote poem 55 to make a request to Monomachos, should be identified as Ioannes Mauropous; see below, 328.

<sup>92</sup> See Follieri, 'Poesie', 137–8, for the identification of the addressee of this poem as Maria Skleraina, the mistress of Monomachos.

Christophoros wrote a laudatory funeral epigram for this general and rebel (poem 65), and possibly a long hexametric poem.<sup>93</sup> Maniakes was evidently *persona non grata* for the milieu around Monomachos, with which Mauropous and Psellos were associated. A further indication may be that there is no trace of imperial or other high-placed connections of Christophoros after poem 95 (written for the church of St George in Mangana). Christophoros may have belonged to a rival faction within the elite, possibly one of the anonymous calumniators of Psellos and Mauropous.

Christophoros' position within the elite is different in other respects too. His poetry, unlike that of his contemporaries, is permeated by a wide range of different forms of friendships and connections, not all of them strictly elitist. The friend who emerges most clearly in his poetry is Niketas Synadenos, addressee of poems 27 and 43, probably also of poem 100. Then there are the friends who receive gifts or give gifts to Christophoros (see above and Chapter 8), and friends such as Niketas the *protospatharios*, who is also asked to provide Christophoros with reading (poem 142). Apart from these personal friends, Christophoros is strongly tied to his family, writing poems on the death of his mother (57), consoling his father (58–60), and lamenting the deaths of his sister Anastaso (75–7) and his brother Ioannes (44, perhaps also 107). There is also a poem for his niece who had made a wonderful cake depicting the zodiacal cycle and the planets (poem 42). In this poem we find a realistic touch in his portraits of women that is alien to his contemporaries.<sup>94</sup>

Family ties play an important role in Christophoros' poetry and defined to a high degree his poetic self-image. But there other alliances too. One of the strongest is Christophoros' loyalty to the school of St Theodore of Sphorakiou, of which he ardently defends the teachers in poems 9 and 10, attacking a rival school in poem 11. As we will see in Chapter 6, attachment to a certain school or teacher played an important role in intellectual networks in the eleventh century.

<sup>93</sup> M. Brogginì, 'Il carme *Εἰς τὸν Μανιάκη*ν περὶ τοῦ μούλτου attribuito al Cristoforo Mitileneo', *Porphyra* 15 (2011), 14–34.

<sup>94</sup> See P. Magdalino, 'Cosmological Confectionery and Equal Opportunity in the Eleventh Century. An Ekphrasis by Christopher of Mitylene (poem 42)', in: J. Nesbitt (ed.), *Byzantine Authors: Literary Activities and Preoccupations. Texts and Translations dedicated to the Memory of Nicolas Oikonomides* (Leiden 2003), 1–6, esp. 5–6.

Moreover, Christophoros' poems show an ardent attachment to his Constantinopolitan neighbourhood, Protasiou. At the end of poem 114, the poet gives a *sphragis*, identifying himself first as an imperial secretary, and then as 'living near the church of Protasiou, I mean close to Strategion' (vv. 131–2). It is clear that Christophoros deemed this fact important. And in poem 36, a polemical poem against two of his enemies, Christophoros boastingly advises them to stay away far from Protasiou (v. 12). We do not know much about feelings towards particular neighbourhoods in Constantinople, or rivalry between them, but I would suggest that these poems of Christophoros provide an indication of this.

### 5.4.3. An urbane ethos

Intellectual distinction as such was not the only means of delineating the elite. There were also more impenetrable tools of distinction: the right manners, conversational and social skills, bodily behaviour, etc. The word *ἦθος* is frequently used to encompass these aspects. They are less conspicuous and less easily measurable, but precisely for this reason were an important mark of distinction. Various texts established an ideal portrait of the 'intellectual gentleman', a set of requirements that should be fulfilled by anyone assuming a position in the intellectual field. Central to this ideal is *asteiotes*, an age-old notion that connects the sophistication of the city dweller with a sociable lifestyle, refined speech, and, more specifically, humour.<sup>95</sup> In many of Psellos' texts, *asteiotes* or related ideas such as that of *politikos* refer to a sociable, cheerful person with a spontaneous charm, which finds its expression in witty speech.<sup>96</sup>

Poetry was an important medium to convey this ideal of 'urbanity'. Funeral poems in particular provided the poet with an excellent opportunity to proclaim the image of the ideal gentleman. In all portraits

<sup>95</sup> On the concept of *asteiotes*, see Magdalino, 'Snobbery', 70; and id., 'In Search of the Byzantine Courtier: Leo Choïrosphaktes and Constantine Manasses', in: Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture*, 141–65, here 145.

<sup>96</sup> For *asteiotes* in Psellos, see C. Cupane, 'Στήλη της ἀστειότητος. Byzantinische Vorstellungen weltlicher Vollkommenheit in Realität und Fiktion', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 45 (2011), 193–209; S. Papaioannou, *Michael Psellos. Rhetoric and Authorship in Byzantium* (Cambridge/New York 2013), 131–65; F. Bernard, 'Asteiotes and the Ideal of the Urbane Intellectual in the Byzantine Eleventh Century', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* (forthcoming).

of male persons described and praised in eleventh-century funeral poems, there are some essential shared characteristics to be found. For the audience gathered at the funeral (and of course also later readers), the poet depicts the image of an ideal intellectual, the deceased serving as a model to follow. In this way, these poems reinforce cohesion among members of the elite.

In Mauropous' poem for the *proteuon* Theodoros (poem 36), the deceased is described in this way (vv. 7–11):

θεοῦ γὰρ οὗτος δῶρον ἦν φερωνύμως,  
ἦθει, λόγῳ, τρόπῳ τε καὶ λαμπρῷ βίῳ  
τὴν εὐγένειαν τὴν ἄνωθεν δεικνύων.  
οὗτος λόγους ἄριστος ἐκ μαθημάτων,  
οἷς ἐτράφη τε καὶ συνῆν καθ' ἡμέραν. 10

*As his name tells, he is truly a 'gift of God',  
showing his supreme nobleness  
in his character, his words, his manners and his brilliant way of life.  
He excelled in words, thanks to his education, 10  
by which he was brought up, and with which he was together every day.*

It is telling that the quality of *εὐγένεια*, literally referring to a 'fine birth', is not connected with a famous family lineage, but with Theodoros' personal accomplishments. Nobleness of spirit replaces nobleness of birth. He owes his excellence in *logoi* to his incessant efforts in the service of his study, which is again represented as the preliminary for a good reputation in *hoi logoi*. But there is more: what distinguishes Theodoros is not only his *logoi*, but also his fine manners and gentleness, his entire way of life (*βίος*). All this defines Theodoros' 'nobility'.

Poem 37, for the *chartophylax* Ioannes, also focuses on the intellectual qualities of the deceased. A 'wise man' has died (v. 8: ἀνὴρ σοφός), whose talent in *hoi logoi* is mentioned repeatedly. In this case, education also functions as a force connecting the deceased with the poet: Mauropous mentions that their strong friendship was forged by the education and the teachers they shared.<sup>97</sup> The *vestarches* Andronikos, whose death is lamented in poems 38 and 39, is also said to shine forth in *logoi*, as well as in wealth, fame, and laws (38.2). Poem 39 begins with the outburst: 'If even wise men die, what is the reason

<sup>97</sup> Mauropous 37.42: *μαθημάτων κοινῶν καὶ διδασκάλων*.

for words?' Elsewhere, Andronikos is called 'the statue of *hoi logoi*' (39.11: τὸ τῶν λόγων ἄγαλμα).

The longest funeral poem for a member of the intellectual elite is Basileios Kekaumenos' often overlooked poem on the death of Anastasios Lizix, *vestarches*, *hypatos*, and *krites*.<sup>98</sup> Lizix was probably Basileios' former teacher (see v. 216). He was also known to Psellos, who mourned his death in several letters and a monody, praising his erudition.<sup>99</sup> Basileios' poem not only praises Anastasios' knowledge and erudition (vv. 29–33), but also his charms and his graceful manners: Anastasios had a 'modest character (*ethos*) full of cheerfulness' (v. 39), and possessed 'the charm of solemn behaviour and well-becoming manners' (vv. 62–6).<sup>100</sup>

A similar profile of the ideal intellectual is depicted in Christophoros' poem for his brother Ioannes (poem 44), a heavily damaged poem. In the section in which Christophoros praises his brother, scraps of verses are legible in which Ioannes' rhetorical abilities are praised (vv. 25–33). At line 29, we encounter the word *ἀστειώτης* connected with *ἐνκοσμία* (v. 29): 'an urbanity that displays proper behaviour'. Christophoros' phrase refers to a sense for humour that does not spill over into scurrility, but shows proper restraint. A few lines later, the related idea *ἀστεϊσμός* turns up, in connection with Ioannes' words. Here, it must mean 'witticisms', or 'mots d'esprit'; that is, elegant phrasings in the vein of a Constantinopolitan gentleman. Ioannes' words are also said to display 'Attic grace of study' (v. 31: *σπουδῆς λόγοι φέροντες Ἀττικὴν χάριν*). Linguistic standards acquired by assiduous study converge here with witty speech and amiable manners to form an ideal portrait of a refined city dweller.

Conversely, anything that is contemptible, from the perspective of the elite, is subsumed under the idea of *ἀγροικία* (literally 'boorishness'). We find a forceful depiction of *agroikia* in poem IV of Michael Grammatikos. This poem is a vitriolic attack on someone who has been appointed as bishop of Philomelion. The poem begins with a

<sup>98</sup> S. G. Mercati, 'Versi di Basilio Cecaumeno in morte di Anastasio Lizix', in: *Collectanea Byzantina*, I, 321–42, text: 336–42.

<sup>99</sup> See for example Psellos, *Ep. K-D* 127, p. 151, l. 10: *ὄ μὴδεὶς τῶν ὄντων ἴσος τὴν λογίότητα*. For a full overview, see M. Jeffreys et al., *Prosopography of the Byzantine World*, <<http://pbw.kcl.ac.uk>>, Anastasios 2101 (to which Basileios' poem can be added).

<sup>100</sup> Basileios Kekaumenos, v. 39: *ἦθος ταπεινὸν καὶ γέμον θυμηδίας* and vv. 65–6: *ἡ χάρις/ἡθῶν τε σεμνῶν καὶ τρόπων ἐνκοσμίων*.



pun on the proverb *βοὺν ἐπὶ γλώττης φέρειν* ('to bear an ox on the tongue'): the bishop not only does not know how to utter a word, he *is* in fact an ox. In this way, from the very beginning of the poem, the bishop is associated with rural characteristics. The poet asks him to tell of his life, to produce his credentials, as it were, among which education, in the eyes of the poet, is, of course, the most important. The remainder of the long poem consists of the bishop's supposed answer. He was raised in a rough village, 'where people had the same brains as the cattle' (v. 19). Pronunciation is an indication of this: apparently, the people from his village pronounced the upsilon as an /i/. The poet dismisses this pronunciation, tellingly, as *ἀγροίκως* (v. 21). We can infer that the Constantinopolitan elite, according to a socio-linguistic reflex that is universal, preserved a conservative, 'metropolitan', pronunciation of the *v* as /y/.<sup>101</sup>

The bishop worked as a cowherd, saying about himself that he was 'in everything a cow except for the mooing; for in my voice I am a puffed-up ass'.<sup>102</sup> Then he describes how he became bishop, by recruiting prostitutes for a certain Philippos, bishop of Amorion. This was also his teacher, but instead of theory, he taught him 'deeds'. Now he continues his dubious business, with '*agroikia* guiding me in my audacity'.<sup>103</sup> In this portrait of the bishop of Philomelion, all stock associations and clichés connected with *agroikia* (also the age-old comparison with a Cyclops, v. 83) come together, referring to lack of education, provincial manners, immoral behaviour, resistance to education, defective pronunciation, etc.

It is no accident that Christophoros likens Basileios Choirinos to a pig (poem 84), the grammarian Georgios to a farmer (23), and Moschos to a bull (31): rustic images were effective to debunk an adversary. In poem 40 as well, where *agroikia* stands central (see above), Christophoros avers that our *idiotes* will remain a 'herdsman' in the world of intellectuals (v. 62). In a book epigram for a foundation document of a monastery, Mauropous stresses that this document cannot be read by the more 'boorish' (*agroikos*).<sup>104</sup>

<sup>101</sup> See also F. Lauritzen, 'Michael the Grammarian's Irony about hypsilon. A Step Towards Reconstructing Byzantine Pronunciation', *BSI* 67 (2009), 161–8.

<sup>102</sup> Michael Grammatikos, ed. S. G. Mercati, 'Ancora intorno a *Μιχαήλ Γραμματικός ὁ Ἱερομόναχος*', in: *Collectanea Byzantina*, I, 121–35, poem IV, vv. 35–6.

<sup>103</sup> Michael Grammatikos, poem IV, v. 78: *ἀγροικίας μοι τοῦ θράσους ἡγουμένης*.

<sup>104</sup> Mauropous 46.8: *οὐδ' ἀκουσὸς τοῖς ἀγροικικωτέροις*.

The spatial, geographical dimension of the opposition *asteiotes/politikos* and *agroikia* remains very relevant: the city of Constantinople was a limited space, where the best teachers were available, where all political and cultural developments took place, while the countryside was perceived as a place of utter desolation and exile. This opposition and its normative power run as a red thread through the texts produced by the elite of the eleventh century. Mauroπους, who hailed from Paphlagonia, expresses it in its most condensed form in poem 54, where he says: 'I was boorish yesterday, but now I am urbane' (v. 64: *ἄγροικος ἦν χθές, ἀστικὸς δὲ νῦν μάλα*). This change is attributed to his introduction at court and his acquaintance with the emperor. The imperial court, in the middle of the city, is represented as the radiating centre of *asteiotes*.

Hence, we can easily understand why, except for a few poems of Mauroπους written for objects in Euchaita, the secular poetry of this period is always set in Constantinople. To cite a revealing example: of Monomachos' lavish monastic foundations, we have numerous poems on the church of St George in Mangana<sup>105</sup> but none on his foundation of Nea Mone on Chios.

The poems of Christophoros in particular provide us with many views of contemporary city life. In his collection, we find poems on: the Hippodrome (poems 6 and 50); the Oatos hall in the palace (98); the monasteries of Horaia Pege (105), Manouel (120), Theotokos (7, possibly the monastery of Pege<sup>106</sup>), and Proedrou (135); the churches of St George in Mangana (95, possibly 96) and of St Kyros (68); the schools of St Theodore in Sphorakiou (9 and 10) and Theotokos in Chalkoprataia (11); and the statue of Hercules in the palace *ton areton* (143). Other events, such as the disastrous festival of St Thomas (1), the funeral of Romanos III in his church of Peribleptou (8), the *proleusis* of Michael (24), the appointment of Keroularios as patriarch (61), and a procession of *notaroi* students (136), take place in the city. A typical urban vignette is the poem on the official Konstantinos, who did not leave his house because he loathed the mud on the streets (132). Constantinople is personified in the lament over the

<sup>105</sup> See also 307–10.

<sup>106</sup> This was the most well known monastery of the Theotokos at this time; cf. R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin. Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat oecuménique. III. Les églises et les monastères des grands centres byzantins* (Paris 1975), 232–7. The poem itself possibly alludes to the source (*πηγή*).

wrongdoings of Michael V (52), and apostrophized in the poem against the sham intellectual (40). Typically, Christophoros receives the figs and grapes in poems 87–8 from the countryside (ἐξ ἀγροῦ), implying that he himself was in the city; something similar happens in poem 90, where he relates the horse races in Constantinople to some friends who were away in the countryside. In some poems (36, and the end of 114), a partisanship in favour of his own neighbourhood, that of Protasiou, may be detected. For Christophoros and his colleagues, the world where they felt at home was confined to the walls of Constantinople. In their poems, and notably through the concepts of *asteiotes* and *agroikia*, they reinforced the cohesion of their own urban elite, firmly positioning Constantinople as the only viable place for *hoi logoi*.

*Asteiotes* also implies humour, and it would possibly be rewarding to see how the concept of *asteiotes* induces the kind of humour that is present in our poetic texts. Some poems, notably those of Christophoros, bristling with puns and jokes, may reflect this appreciation of ‘urbane’ wit.

## 5.5. AMBITIONS AND ETHICAL CONSTRAINTS

### 5.5.1. The ethic of disinterestedness

In the *Chronographia*, when comparing the wise men under Basileios II with the intellectuals of his own time, Psellos vehemently reprimands contemporary students of letters because they study *hoi logoi* not as an end in itself, but first and foremost to gain money out of them:

*Most do not pursue education along these lines, but they consider a lucrative career as the most important motivation for their education in hoi logoi, and it is rather for this reason that they engage in the study of letters. Moreover, if their goal does not succeed for them at once, they give up at the very beginning. To the pillory with such men!*<sup>107</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book I, §29: οἱ πολλοὶ παρὰ τὴν παιδείου οὐχ οὕτω βαδίζουσιν, ἀλλὰ τὸ χρηματίζεσθαι εἰς πρώτην αἰτίαν τῶν λόγων ἀναφέρουσι, μᾶλλον δὲ διὰ τοῦτο τὰ περὶ τοῦς λόγους σπουδάζουσι, κἂν μὴ εὐθὺς τὸ τέλος προσήει, ἀφίστανται τῆς ἀρχῆς. Οἶτοι μὲν οὖν ἐρρώσθων. The verb *χρηματίζεσθαι* in this context can have two significations: it can mean ‘make money’, or ‘have a function’; here, it may refer to both.

This passage condemns a phenomenon that must surely have existed: young students flocking to the schools to study letters out of opportunistic and materialistic motivations. But Psellos denounces this practice in firm terms: *hoi logoi* ought to be studied as a goal in itself, out of interest in the subject matter. And unlike the aborted attempts of these people, assiduous and effortful study is the only possible way to succeed.

Psellos himself strives to measure up to this image of detachment from material concerns. In a text addressed to his students, he says this about his motivations in teaching:

*Therefore, I stay awake until late at night, and when day dawns, I hurry immediately to my books, as is my habit, not in order to make some gain out of it, but to collect knowledge from them for your advantage.*<sup>108</sup>

It is not only the ideal of *agrypnia* that permeates here: Psellos stresses that he does not teach to make material gains. He confirms this in his *Chronographia*: he distributed his knowledge to anyone who wanted it, without asking anything in return.<sup>109</sup> Mauropous too, in the poem on his house, states that he distributed his knowledge for free (47.30–1: *προίκα*). This has to be contrasted with the image of the *maistor* of Chalkoprateia, scorned in Christophoros 11 because he sold his *schede* for money, thus turning the school of Chalkoprateion into a *schedoprateion* ('*schedos* shop').<sup>110</sup>

What we notice here are the traces of ethical concerns, with which our poets had to reckon when they pursued the path of display and ambition. Worldly ambition was in Byzantium often regarded with suspicion. Ambition connected with the lofty spiritual ideal of *hoi logoi* was from this perspective particularly a sacrilege. Occupation with letters was supposed to be untainted by financial concerns.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, exaggerated display of rhetoric could easily incur the accusation of being mere sophistry, beguiling and untruthful. This debate, as old as rhetoric itself, again flares up in this period. The act of authoring texts, and making them circulate, always came under

<sup>108</sup> Psellos, *Or. min.* 24, 23–6: ὅθεν διαγρυπνῶν μέχρι πόρρω νυκτῶν παραταπειλάσης ἡμέρας εὐθὺς περὶ τὰ βιβλία πάλω, ὥσπερ μοι ἔθος ἐστὶ καταγίνομαι, οὐχ ἵν' αὐτός τι ἐκείθεν πορίσωμαι, ἀλλ' ὅπως ἂν ὑμῖν τὸν ἐκείθεν συνερανίσωμαι νοῦν.

<sup>109</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VI, §43.

<sup>110</sup> More on the *schedos* below, 259–66.

<sup>111</sup> For this, see also P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143–1180* (Cambridge 1993), 336–56.

suspicion in Byzantium.<sup>112</sup> Authoring a text—that is, assuming the responsibility of its creation—contravenes the Christian ideals of humility and self-effacement.<sup>113</sup> It is seen as a sign of vainglorious ambition. Texts should only aim at edification or introspection, not at the demonstration of the personal skills of the author. This argument is a dangerous weapon in the hands of many opponents of our poets, seeking to undermine the authority of these successful men.

As we have seen, in the texts of ‘outsiders’, such as Symeon and Kekaumenos, the activity of writing is inextricably connected to the desire to display and to please, to such a degree that they themselves had to ward off the accusation that they wrote texts with such mundane ends in mind. But even in the texts of Psellos, arguably the most demonstrative and ambitious intellectual of his time, we find from time to time (when the occasion requires it) condemnations of ambition, for example in the quotation from the *Chronographia* above. And when praising the more simple style of Symeon the Metaphrast, Psellos condemns the ‘futile’ writers (οἱ περιττοί) for desiring to write everything ‘for display’ (ἐπίδειξις) and not for moral edification (ἡθους κατόρθωσις).<sup>114</sup> Elsewhere in this oration, Psellos asserts that most people pursue studies with the aim of becoming rich, not to attain higher thoughts; this is of course negatively valued.<sup>115</sup> Here again, we find an example of the moral prescription that learning should not serve mundane ends but should aim at ‘higher things’. These remarks obviously serve a specific argument here, as always in a work of Psellos; they blatantly contradict his account of his own career, and the emphasis on *epideixis* in some of his letters.<sup>116</sup> When we view his works as a whole, his stance towards display and social promotion can be called ambiguous. The discourse about ambition favoured by intellectuals is fraught with ambiguity, and one should always interpret statements about this subject with consideration of the text’s intention, its genre, its public, etc.

<sup>112</sup> See also A. Kazhdan and G. Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium* (Washington DC 1982), 33.

<sup>113</sup> D. Krueger, *Writing and Holiness. The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East* (Philadelphia 2004), 94–109.

<sup>114</sup> Michael Psellos, *Orationes hagiographicae*, ed. E. Fisher (Leipzig/Stuttgart 1994), 7.240–1.

<sup>115</sup> Psellos, *Orationes hagiographicae*, 7.85–8.

<sup>116</sup> One telling example: P. Gautier (ed.), ‘Quelques lettres de Psellos inédites ou déjà éditées’, *REB* 44 (1986), 111–97, nr. 7.

For this reason, the positive or negative connotations of some words can change from text to text. For example, in the passage of his *epitaphios logos* for Niketas, Psellos mentions that he and Niketas chased after ἐπίδειξις and τὸ περιττόν (§5),<sup>117</sup> while in the oration for Symeon Metaphrastes (and in many other texts) these words have a manifestly negative connotation. κομψός (elegant, polished) and derivatives have an apparently positive connotation in Christophoros 79.4 and Mauropous 29.21, but are seen as negative in Mauropous 92.46 and in many other writings. The quality of ἀστεία (with the pregnant meaning of ‘funny’) is seen as negative by Symeon,<sup>118</sup> but positive in Christophoros 44.31.

We can conclude that our poets were forced to come to terms with a certain tension. This tension was one between the need to display their worth as *logioi* on the one hand, and the requirement to uphold the impression that their study and writing did not conceal material interests. As we have seen, Christophoros dealt with this by representing himself as an intellectual devoted to his studies only for the love of *hoi logoi*. Psellos and Mauropous, perhaps because they had a more visible status, had to develop other strategies to resolve the tension and to provide an answer to the many calumniators.

### 5.5.2. Mauropous’ self-representation: between ambition and resignation

The reputation of Psellos has always been plagued by the many contradictions in his works. This man, who constantly found himself in the public eye, had to maintain a flexible attitude towards the different political circumstances he had to face. This resulted in many volte-faces and blatant contradictions in his works. Consequently, in his own time as well as now, he has been accused of sacrificing intellectual integrity for the sake of personal ambition.<sup>119</sup> More fruitfully, scholars have recently begun to see these tensions in

<sup>117</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. in Nicetam*, l. 80–4. The word περιττόν is not to be translated by ‘serietà’, as Guglielmino does: it connotes aspects of frivolous but unnecessary display, and can perhaps best be translated as ‘virtuosity’.

<sup>118</sup> Symeon Neos Theologos, *Catéchèses*, ed. B. Krivochéine and J. Paramelle (Paris 1963–5), or. 28, l. 237.

<sup>119</sup> See the various earlier views presented in Ljubarskij, *Προσωπικότητα και έργο*, 11–40.

the framework of self-representational strategies<sup>120</sup> and rhetorical exigencies.<sup>121</sup>

Not so with Mauropous: modern accounts of Mauropous repeatedly represent him as a sincere and modest man who initially, out of an inner conviction, chose a contemplative life as a disinterested amateur of letters, and who only reluctantly, at the instigation of his friend Michael Psellos, enjoyed some social success, only to be later cruelly banished because his mischievous friend let him down.<sup>122</sup> In fact, these evaluations are merely echoing Mauropous' self-representation. We have to take into account the fact that, unlike Psellos, Mauropous made a collection of his complete works, a collection that has survived intact into our times. As a result, he had a firmer control over the self-image imparted by his writings. As we have argued in Chapter 4, Mauropous' book is to be read in parallel to his own life. The principal events of his life regulate the collection: his teaching in Constantinople, his speedy rise at court, and his appointment as metropolitan of Euchaita. Central to the justification of these biographical events is the question of 'exploiting' the talent for *logoi*. In this section, I want to critically reconsider the self-representative strategies that Mauropous uses in his collection to resolve this central question.

Mauropous' first poem, the *programma* to his whole book, guides the reader in interpreting his works against the background of his life, introducing 'measure' (*metron*) as the main goal of his life and works alike. The poet goes to great lengths to express his devotion to this ideal (vv. 1–5):

<sup>120</sup> See S. Papaioannou, *Michael Psellos: Rhetoric and Authorship in Byzantium* (Cambridge/New York 2013) and E. Pietsch, *Die Chronographia des Michael Psellos: Kaisergeschichte, Autobiografie und Apologie* (Wiesbaden 2005).

<sup>121</sup> M. Jeffreys, 'Psellos and 'His' Emperors: Fact, Fiction and Genre', in: R. Macrides (ed.), *History As Literature in Byzantium: Papers from the Fortieth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham* (Aldershot 2007), 73–92; C. Chamberlain, 'The Theory and Practice of Imperial Panegyric in Michael Psellos. The Tension Between History and Rhetoric', *Byz* 56 (1986), 16–27.

<sup>122</sup> So for instance E. Follieri, *Giovanni Mauropode. Otto canoni paraclatici a Gesù Cristo* (Rome 1967), 8: 'il modesto, il schivo, il ingenuo Giovanni'; Weiss, *Oströmische Beamte*, 83–4: 'der aufrichtige und lebenswürdige Privatlehrer des Psellos'; S. Chondridou, 'Κωνσταντίνος Λειχούδης, Ιωάννης Μαυρόπους, Μιχαήλ Ψελλός, Ιωάννης Ξιφιλίνος: Η τετρας των σοφών. Η άνοδος και η πτώση της γύρω στα μέσα του 11ου αιώνα', in: *Η αυτοκρατορία σε κρίση (:) Το βυζάντιο του 11ο αιώνα (1025–81)* (Athens 2003), 409–23, here 412; Angold, *Byzantine Empire*, 101: 'an amateur of letters', instructing his pupils 'for the love of it'.

Πάλαι διδαχθεὶς ὡς ἄριστον πᾶν μέτρον,  
 τὰ τ' ἄλλα πάντα μετριάζω, καὶ λόγους.  
 οἱ γὰρ περιττοὶ τῶν περιττῶν εἰκότως  
 χρήξιν δοκοῦσι πραγμάτων τε καὶ λόγων·  
 ἐμοὶ δὲ – μικρῶ – πραγμάτων μικρὸς λόγος. 5

*Having learnt earlier that every kind of measure is supreme,  
 I measure everything, also my words;  
 for excessive people seem  
 to need, correspondingly, excessive things and words;  
 but I, being small, have only small concern about things. 5*

Of course, this can be seen as a conventional variation on the *topos* of μέγα βιβλίον, μέγα κακόν. But it also refers to the ethical ideal of moderation, an ideal to be sought after both in life and in literature. Moreover, μέτρον can also mean ‘metre’, and, hence, ‘poetry’. This double sense of μέτρον as ‘moral measure’ and ‘metrical measure’ was also exploited in a programmatic poem by Gregory of Nazianzos (II.1.39: εἰς τὰ ἔμμετρα).<sup>123</sup> This poem, as well as the other poems of Gregory ‘on the self’ provided important models for subsequent Byzantine introspective poetry.<sup>124</sup> The autobiographical representation of Gregory, who tried to reconcile the consequences of holding a high position with a reclusive religious life, provided a blueprint for many a Byzantine poet who found himself in a similar situation.<sup>125</sup> Gregory held silence as an important ideal, thus reserving a place for introspective authorship, which is ‘measured’ (that is, metrically confined and of moderate pretensions).<sup>126</sup> Likewise, for Mauropous, the connection between life and words expressed by the concept of *metron* forms the backbone of his self-representation. Poetry, as speech confined by metre, is measured discourse, and thus appears

<sup>123</sup> On this connection, see also P. Magdalino, ‘Cultural Change?’, 31. On the double meaning of *metron*, see G. D. Bayliss, ‘The “Measured” Approach: Bad Pun or Theological Stance in the Poetry of Gregory of Nazianzus?’, in: A. Brent and M. Vinzent (eds), *Studia Patristica vol. LII. Including papers presented at the British Patristic Conference, Durham, September 2010* (Leuven 2012), 171–83.

<sup>124</sup> M. Hinterberger, *Autobiographische Traditionen in Byzanz* (Vienna 1999), 71; Hunger, *Literatur*, II, 158–62.

<sup>125</sup> Papaioannou, *Rhetoric and Authorship*, 136–7.

<sup>126</sup> F. Gautier, ‘Le carême de silence de Grégoire de Nazianze: une conversion à la littérature?’, *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 47 (2001), 97–143, and Krueger, *Writing and Holiness*, 1–2.



as the perfect form to give a self-representation intent on emphasizing moderate ambitions. The well known maxim quoted in the first line, ἄριστον πᾶν μέτρον, combines the prestige of poetry with a universally recognized ethical ideal.

After this introduction, Mauropous does avow that he himself has written a great deal of words, but these efforts seem pointless in hindsight (vv. 7–9). Now, at the moment of ‘publishing’ his collection, his intentions are more humble (vv. 33–7):

ἔχοντες οὖν μοι τοὺς βραχεῖς, φίλοι, λόγους,  
 αὐτοὶ δὲ ἔργων μάλλον ἢ μακρῶν λόγων  
 εὐχεσθε πᾶσιν εὐαρεστεῖν τὸν φίλον,  
 πλέον δὲ πάντων τῷ λογιστῇ καὶ λόγῳ,  
 ᾧ καὶ λόγος λέγεται, πραγμάτων λόγος.

35

*So, my friends, now that you have these words of mine,  
 pray that it will be through deeds rather than words  
 that your friend may please everyone,  
 above all the Word, who takes account of everything,  
 and who is concerned about deeds, even if he is called Word.*

35

Mauropous here defends the argument that deeds matter more than words. Giving pleasure through words, if viewed in the broader context of life and death, is reprehensible. As a result, Mauropous renounces the ambitions once entertained in his texts. His words have remained unprofitable, ἄπρακτοι (v. 38). Moreover, by presenting these works not to a powerful person, but simply to his friends, he creates the impression that his ultimate collection is no longer part of the game of display and worldly ambition. This can be compared to Kekaumenos insisting that he wrote his work for an intimate milieu and not for the wider public.<sup>127</sup> The desire to please is not directed to powerful persons here on earth, but to God, who judges men only according to their deeds. Ambition is transformed into devotion.

The poems that follow in the collection provide proof of Mauropous’ worldly success. As argued above (147), they can be read as ‘stills’ in the poet’s life, frozen snapshots of Mauropous’ successful life as a court orator and epigrammatist. However, after reading the warnings pronounced in the first poem, the reader knows these

<sup>127</sup> Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, §191. Cf. also above, 159–60.

ambitions turned to ashes: the poems should be read as negative models from an ethical viewpoint.

Poems 89 to 93, the poems which have ‘himself’ as subject in the title, are of course essential in Mauropous’ self-representation. Their main theme is the tension between ambition and resignation. Traditionally, poems 89 to 93 are considered to have been written in the same period: namely, just before and just after his appointment as metropolitan of Euchaita.<sup>128</sup> However, poems 89 and 90 at least do not present themselves as having been written at this time: the promotion is nowhere apparent and Mauropous even seems very confident that he can pursue this tranquil course of life. This is in contrast to the more desperate pleas in poems 91 and 92, which respond to a real threat. In addition to this, poems 89 and 90 use the present tense throughout, which creates the impression that the poems are written as a genuine expression of feeling at an *earlier* moment in Mauropous’ life, and consequently not as a reaction to the imminent appointment. There is also another subtle difference between the two pairs of poems: the title of 89 is ‘Υπὲρ ἑαυτοῦ πρὸς Χριστόν, while 90 neatly takes up from 89 by means of the title ἄλλοι. Poems 91 and 92, by contrast, have the slightly different title *Εἰς ἑαυτόν*, the conventional title for a *katanyxis*, an introspective poem expressing contrition. This will prove to be an important distinction. Moreover, 89 and 90 are addressed to Christ, as an apology, while 91 and 92 form dialogues between soul and reason.

Poem 89 and 90 seem to be written as an answer to the implicit accusation that the only motivation behind Mauropous’ intellectual pursuits is personal ambition. Throughout the two poems, two lines reoccur as a refrain (four times: 89.1–2, 89.20–1, 90.1–2, 90.31–2):

Πολλὴ χάρις σοι τῶν λόγων, θεοῦ Λόγε,  
οἷς εὐδόκησας δωρεάν με πλουτίσαι.

*I thank you very much for the words, oh Word of God,  
which it pleased You to enrich me with as a free gift.*

The poems argue that Mauropous has made use of his talent for words, but in an acceptable way. In poem 89, he claims that he has

<sup>128</sup> Anastasi, ‘Il Canzoniere di Giovanni di Euchaita’, 121; Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, 98; P. Volpe Cacciatore, ‘I carmi “autobiografici” di Giovanni Mauropode’, in: L. Torraca (ed.), *Scritti in onore di Italo Gallo* (Naples 2002), 561–9, here 567–8.

made a prudent use of words (1–9). Again the word *μέτρον* is used to express this: ‘I placed clear limitations (*μέτρα*) on my needs.’<sup>129</sup> Every surplus of success and wealth he has shunned, in contrast to others, who, out of greed, have made improper use of their rhetorical talents (vv. 8–9). Mauropous says he is happy to have no insatiable desires such as those people have; rather, he wants to receive remuneration from above (vv. 10–22). Words are his only care, day and night; and his only source of pleasure and joy (vv. 23–8). These last sentences of course recall the image of the disinterested intellectual devoted to the pursuit of knowledge. Poem 90 weighs the advantages of a simple life, compared with the blissful, but dangerous, life of success (vv. 3–30). *ἀπραξία* is proclaimed as his desired way of life (v. 4). Words are his honour and wealth, and words prevent his desires from wandering astray (vv. 32–43).

It is not so much introspection and *katanyxis* as the advancement of an intellectual ideal that is at stake in both of these poems. In contrast to the poems that will follow, the *persona* of the poet, as it emerges here, lives a carefree life untainted by excessive worldly success. Moreover, the life he leads is a life in the present, not a life that seems to be almost over, as in most *eis heauton* poems. Mauropous is also entirely happy with this way of life (89.37: ‘I have no great difficulties with my present situation (*τοῖς νῦν*)’), and 90.3 ‘this enjoyable life’).<sup>130</sup> In poems 89 and 90, Mauropous thus departs from the traditional *katanyktic persona* in most *eis heauton* poems, who shows regret and longs only for eternal life.

By contrast, poems 91 and 92 are poems typical of the *eis heauton* genre. They are conceived as dialogues between soul and reason. The question of the ambitions tied to the use of *logoi* remains the core problem, but this is now related to a more concrete threat.

In poem 91, Mauropous’ soul offers his reason three advantages which the fulfilment of ambition can bring. The first, wealth (vv. 1–5), is declined by his reason with the argument that, in death, everybody will remain equally rich or poor. The second offer, power (v. 6: ‘thrones that carry you high’) is brushed aside (vv. 6–26) because men should know their place: it is safer to remain in a humble position, so that everyone can see you the way you are; those who

<sup>129</sup> Mauropous 89.4: *ἔταξα ῥητὰ ταῖς ἐμαῖς χρεῖαις μέτρα*.

<sup>130</sup> Mauropous 89.37: *κἂν μηδὲ τοῖς νῦν σφόδρα δυσκόλως ἔχω*, and 90.3: *πολλὴ χάρις τοῦδε τοῦ τερπνοῦ βίου*.

pride themselves on functions and thrones are no better than the jackdaw from the fable who takes the feathers from other birds. The third offer (vv. 27–41) is renown (v. 27: ‘the applauding crowds’), but Mauropous’ reason points out that the crowd is easily led astray by flattering but deceitful words. The poem closes (vv. 42–3) by advancing these ideas as a life manifesto: Mauropous will continue to live by these laws.

In poem 92, the tone is less restrained. The offer of a promotion seems to take a more and more concrete shape. The opening lines resume the threats from poem 91, but instead of a quiet rational reaction, they now provoke panic reactions from Mauropous’ soul, being pulled in two directions (vv. 1–7):

Ἐλκουσι βαθμοί· πρόσσχες· ἀθρόα ζάλη.  
 ψήφοι φέρονται· συστροφή καταγίδων.  
 θρόνοι καλοῦσιν· ὦ κυβερνήτα, βλέπε.  
 ὄρᾳς ὅσος κύκλωθεν ἡγέρθη κλύδων;  
 σπεῦσον βοήθει. κλύζεται σοι τὸ σκάφος. 5  
 λαβοῦ, τάλαν, τάχιστα τῶν σῶν οἰάκων,  
 λαβοῦ, λογισμέ, πρὶν παραχθῶμεν βία.

*Functions pull—Watch out, a sudden squall!*  
*Votes are cast—A whirling storm.*  
*Thrones call—Oh steersman, look out:*  
*do you see how great a wave rises around?*  
*Come quickly to help; your vessel is tossed around. 5*  
*Hold on fast to the helm, poor man!*  
*Hold on, reason, before we are forcibly carried away!*

Mauropous’ reason thereupon takes the floor (10–24), advising him to walk the proper way. With the passing of time, many others will occupy respected offices, but they will all end up the same way. The only thing to be gained is a pressing and dangerous responsibility. In response, Mauropous’ soul brings up a question that addresses the tension between intellectual activities and social ambitions: ‘So be it, you have spoken well. But then still, how will you cash in on your talent for words?’<sup>131</sup> The phrase *ἐμπορεύομαι τὸν λόγον* expresses in the most blunt way the profitability of learning.

<sup>131</sup> Mauropous 91.25–6: ἔστω, καλῶς εἶρηκας. ἀλλὰ γὰρ πόθεν//τὸ σὸν τάλαντον ἐμπορεύση τοῦ λόγου;

Mauropous' reason adds that his body is so sick that he cannot even utter a word: again, words are not important any more. He now adheres to a new creed that has given short shrift to past tales. He has abandoned 'giving idle demonstrations and talking nonsense in schools and gatherings'.<sup>132</sup> Mauropous' former life, so typical for the eleventh-century ambitious *logios*, is denounced here. He now 'measures his words' (v. 34: *μετριάζω πρὸς λόγους*), an echo of 1.2. He only uses words to soothe his soul (vv. 37–8). He recognizes that in earlier days the gift of eloquence bore fruit for him through teaching the young (vv. 39–50); now he leaves this behind, living an undisturbed life between his books (vv. 51–7). Mauropous' soul then asserts that ambitions should be played out; he should profit from the moment (vv. 58–81). This proposition is brushed aside by claims that worldly renown is a fugitive thing, while eternal renown is something totally different (vv. 82–101); in the end, reason has succeeded in convincing Mauropous not to accept the offer of wealth (vv. 102–6).

It appears throughout the poem that Mauropous in the past had profited from his learning; only with reluctance is he able to quell the bad thoughts in his soul that enumerate the obvious advantages of using learning for ambitious ends. It is also telling that Mauropous' past activities as a teacher are not discredited immediately: his education also contributed to the right behaviour (v. 44: *ἤθος*) of his pupils; it was not only the teaching of 'futile showing off of words' (v. 46: *τῆς τῶν περιττῶν ἐν λόγοις κομψευμάτων*). Part of his justification is his claim that even as a teacher, he already had the moral education of the youth before his eyes. Words such as *περιττός* and *κόμψευμα* here appear in a derogatory sense: they are the despicable aspects of ambition and display. And yet, Mauropous cannot resist mentioning that these pupils are now themselves successful men (vv. 47–50). Again, we have to observe that the main profit of eloquence resided in teaching, for it is this that Mauropous describes when he narrates his past successful life. This is reinforced by the fact that his pupils themselves became teachers, a role equated with other prestigious functions.

All of this falls to pieces in poem 93. As the title above the poem makes clear, Mauropous has been appointed. The word *χειροτονία* cannot refer to anything other than his appointment as metropolitan

<sup>132</sup> Mauropous 2.32–3: *ὕψ' ἤς πέπαυμαι τοῦ θεατρίζειν μάτην//καὶ πολλὰ ληρεῖν ἐν σχολαῖς καὶ συλλόγοις.*

of Euchaita.<sup>133</sup> The title also mentions the term *παλινοδία*: Mauropous was forced to recant the opinions held in poem 92. Poem 93 goes to great lengths to underline that his opinions and philosophy of life have not changed, but that external events have overpowered him. Obviously, Mauropous wishes here to present a justification of his choices in life; but this is not done in a straightforward narrative. We need here to put together a few elements in order to fully grasp the interplay between self-image, biographical elements, and the dynamics of the collection of poems.

First, his appointment, nominally a promotion, was in fact not a promotion in terms of real power or influence—rather the contrary. Psellos' encomium for Mauropous, which contains an account of his services for the emperor (*Or. pan.* 17.415–41), can shed some light on this.<sup>134</sup> In Psellos' account, Mauropous was held in very high regard by Monomachos. The emperor regarded him as a teacher (433), referred to him as a father (429), had frequent contact with him (435), entrusted to him his secrets, and asked for his advice in important state affairs (435–6). This confirms the idea that contemporaries were conscious of Mauropous' importance. Indeed, around the years 1045–7, Mauropous was a renowned figure: he wrote the *Neara* and pronounced public discourses as a court orator around 1047.<sup>135</sup> This is corroborated by some of Mauropous' letters, which unmistakably show him enjoying a prestigious position at court at the moment of writing (*Ep.* 19–20). These letters are written in a Constantinopolitan court milieu, well before his appointment as metropolitan. Hence, the promotion to the see of Euchaita in fact amounted to an exile. From several private letters of Mauropous and Psellos we know well enough that the ordination was indeed felt as an exile and a painful change for Mauropous.<sup>136</sup>

But Mauropous' power and influence, perhaps quite uniquely, were not based on an official function. This enabled him to persistently

<sup>133</sup> Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, 98.

<sup>134</sup> For the fact that Psellos does refer here to Mauropous' appointment as a metropolitan, see A. Karpozilos, 'The Biography of Ioannes Mauropous Again', *Hellenika* 44 (1994), 51–60. The commentary in Dennis' edition is confusing at this point.

<sup>135</sup> J. Lefort, 'Rhétorique et politique: trois discours de Jean Mauropous en 1047', *TM* 6 (1976), 265–303.

<sup>136</sup> For instance Mauropous, *Ep.* 51; Psellos, *Ep. K-D* 45. See also Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, 34–5.

advance a self-image of a disinterested intellectual, and this not only when threatened by the appointment as metropolitan. A comparison with one of his letters can illustrate this. Letter 5 is an answer directed to an unknown person in response to an offer of the function of *chartophylax*. Since the letters are ordered chronologically,<sup>137</sup> it must have been written early in his life; all elements in the letter also accord with this. Mauropous refuses, with arguments that perfectly agree with the discourse of the splendidly isolated intellectual in poems 89–92. He shuns the ‘centre’ (l. 3: τὰ μέσα φεύγειν), wants to lead a hidden life, being satisfied with a small and safe corner where he can contemplate himself and God. A high position may be lucrative, but it conceals many hidden dangers. Even the wordings and metaphors are very similar to those of the poems: compare ἴσως μὲν που καὶ ἄδοξον, τὸ δὲ πλεόν ἀκίνδυνον (*Ep.* 5.34–5) with ἴσως ἄδοξός ἐστιν, ἀλλ’ ἐλευθέρῃ (90.5); the allegory of the ship entering turbulent waters also occurs in the letter as well as in the poems (*Ep.* 5.36–42 and 92.1–7). The letter closes with the request to make this known to the emperor and the patriarch; it may be published for everyone as an apology: this would correspond, I think, to the destination that Mauropous envisaged for the poems.

There might have been a real reluctance to accept high functions, because of the responsibilities and dangers attached to them. In their themes and motifs, Mauropous’ poems may be compared to the so-called *paraitesis* poems by near-contemporaries of Mauropous. Both Nikolaos Kerkyraos and Nikolaos Mouzalon each wrote a poem in which they refused an office offered to them.<sup>138</sup> Nikolaos’ poem, for example, is an elaborate articulation of the ethics of resignation and tranquillity.<sup>139</sup> Exactly the same imagery (life as a ship in the midst of stormy waters) is used as in Mauropous 92 (compare with 9–18); here too, the dangers of an ambitious life are depicted in gruesome terms. But whereas Mauropous focuses on the ambiguity of his use of

<sup>137</sup> A. Karpozilos (ed.), *The Letters of Ioannes Mauropous Metropolitan of Euchaita* (Thessaloniki 1990), 29–30.

<sup>138</sup> For these poems, see M. Mullett, ‘The Poetics of Paraitesis: The Resignation Poems of Nicholas of Kerkyra and Nicholas Mouzalon’, in: P. Odorico, M. Hinterberger, and P. Agapitos (eds), «*Doux remède . . .*» *Poésie et poésie à Byzance. Actes du IV<sup>e</sup> colloque international philologique, Paris, 23–24–25 février 2006* (Paris 2009), 157–78.

<sup>139</sup> Nikolaos of Kerkyra, *Στίχοι ἰαμβικοί, γεγονότες ἐπὶ τῇ παραίτησει αὐτοῦ*, ed. S. Lambros, in: *Κερκυραϊκὰ ἀνέκδοτα* (Athens 1882), 30–41.

learning, Nikolaos' poem rather contains moral censure of the vice of hypocrisy.

Even upon accepting a function, misgivings about a promotion are not unheard of. In Psellos' encomium of Xiphilinos, the latter reacted in a similar way upon hearing the news that he was to become patriarch. Instead of thanking the emperor in a flattering way, he confided to Psellos: 'Have I not said before, have I not asseverated, that I would not of my own free will depart from my serenity, and degrade to worldly things?'<sup>140</sup> Hence it becomes more understandable that Mauropous, even at his heyday at court, refused any official title, in keeping with his professed aversion towards ambition. Some letters show that he indeed had to ward off some accusations in this respect (*Ep.* 19 and 20). Since Mauropous' appointment as a metropolitan was technically a promotion, he was able to invoke the argument that he had never been after high functions. It is also in this vein that Psellos, in his encomium, hails Mauropous' reluctance to accept the ordination, which Psellos represents as a brilliant promotion.<sup>141</sup> Mauropous' splendid reputation had proclaimed him as the ideal candidate, but he preferred to stay away from worldly glory; only Psellos' exhortation and the needs of the empire could convince him. There is no word here about an exile. In contrast to his more private letters, Psellos adheres to a more 'official' line in his public encomium.

Finally, Mauropous uses the arrangement of the poems in the collection as a strategy to drive his message home. This arrangement creates the impression of an insight gained progressively, at great pains. However, it is worthwhile to consider it also as an *ex post* presentation. This is especially the case for poems 89 to 91. These are, as we have seen, presented as a manifesto for life. The last lines of poem 90 claim: 'These are the laws that I now write down, which govern me, and to which I hold fast, as far as divine law permits.'<sup>142</sup>

<sup>140</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.*, p. 448: οὐ προὔλεγον, οὐ διεμαρτυρόμην, ὡς οὐκ ἂν ποτε ἐκὼν εἶναι τῆς ἡσυχίας ἐκσταίην, καὶ τοσοῦτον καταβαίην τοῖς πράγμασι; I have slightly altered the punctuation.

<sup>141</sup> Psellos, *Or. pan.* 17.442–71.

<sup>142</sup> Mauropous 90.42–3: τούτους ἐμαντῶ τοὺς νόμους ἔχω γράφειν/λέν οἷς κρατοῦμαι, καὶ κρατῶ τῶν ἄν θέμις. This translation may not be the only one possible. The sense of the last four words might also be: 'and by which (laws) I am master of the things entitled to me'.



Much effort is made to present these poems as expressions of sincere feelings, experienced at a moment when Mauropous was ignorant of any ordination. The status of these poems as sincere statements is echoed at the end of poem 91: ‘Guiding myself by these thoughts and words, I pursue my life.’<sup>143</sup> So, poems 89 to 91, while professing not to have anything to do with this event, do provide a backdrop aiding the construction of the self-image of the disinterested intellectual, defended in 92 and resigned, but in fact still upheld, in poem 93. The strategy of discontinuity is again put to work.

Hence, Mauropous consistently, during his whole stay at the court of Monomachos, projected the self-image of the disinterested philosopher, imparting knowledge and political advice, but not asking any remuneration for this in the form of an official function. When confronted with his ordination as a metropolitan, which in fact amounted to an exile, he tries his best to point out that he has held this ideal for a very long time. Therefore, he places poems 89 and 90 before the poems that revolve around his appointment. The poems can give proof of the uprightness of his renunciation of worldly ambitions. The *παλινοδία* he then advances in poem 93 is not so much a renunciation of former principles, but a self-representation of himself as a victim of the uncontrollable tide of events. He certainly reuses elements from the related traditions of *εἰς ἑαυτόν* poems and *paraitesis* poems, but he interweaves them in an overarching autobiographical narrative that seems to unfold as we read it. The fact that we moderns are so inclined to echo his view shows that he succeeded in controlling the heritage of his historical and poetical persona. This all the more brings out the extraordinary importance of the fact that his works are presented in a self-arranged collection that survives in its original form.

The story does not end here. The *officium* that Mauropous’ nephew Theodoros wrote for him is a lengthy encomium, revolving around Mauropous’ ability to combine virtue (*ἀρετή*) with *logos*. It faithfully echoes the self-image so cherished by Mauropous himself. This is the third strophe:<sup>144</sup>

<sup>143</sup> Mauropous 91.42–3: *τούτοις ἔγωγε τοῖς λογιμοῖς καὶ λόγοις//ἄγων ἑμαυτὸν ἐκπεραίνω τὸν βίον.*

<sup>144</sup> S. G. Mercati, ‘Ufficio di Giovanni Mauropode Euchaita composto dal nipote Teodoro’, in: *Collectanea byzantina*, I, 513–28, here 518.

Σὺ μὲν ὡς φιλήσυχος  
 ζῆν καταμόνας προέκρινας  
 καὶ σχολάζων ἐσπούδαζες  
 ἀκούων τοῦ λόγοντος·  
 σχόλασον καὶ γνῶθι.  
 ἀλλ' αἱ ἀρεταί σου  
 διαδοθεῖσαι πανταχοῦ  
 ἐπίσημόν σε πᾶσι κατέστησαν.  
 ἐντεῦθεν καὶ πρὸς βίαν σοι  
 τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἐγχειρίζουσιν  
 ἐκκλησίας τοὺς οἴακας,  
 ἣν σοφῶς ἐκυβέρνησας.

*As a man loving silence,  
 you chose to live alone  
 and you strove to be still,  
 hearing the one who said:  
 'Be still, and know.'  
 But your virtues  
 became known everywhere  
 and made you famous in the eyes of everyone.  
 Hence they entrusted you,  
 against your will, with the oars  
 of the church of God,  
 which you governed wisely.*

This poem shows the official version of Mauropous' biography: he desired to live like a reclusive intellectual (in the second strophe Theodoros had pointed out that his uncle was a *logios*), but had to consent to a forced promotion. The fact that Mauropous already occupied important functions at the court of Monomachos is glossed over: his function of metropolitan is seen as his first 'real' function, but one that he received 'against his will'. So, ultimately, Mauropous secured his personal legacy by imparting in various ways a coherent and consistent self-image that masterfully resolves the contradictions inherent to the life of an ambitious intellectual.



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## Education

In the previous chapter, education has repeatedly been mentioned as an indispensable link in the chain connecting intellectual activities and social mobility. Education is the cornerstone on which the meritocratic ideal of the intellectual elite is built. It transmits necessary competences and skills, forges ties of long-lasting friendship, and serves as a criterion on the basis of which careers are assigned. As we have seen, it was also put up as a barrier for determining who could appeal for membership of the elite and who could not.

Education is the domain in which our poets gained their reputation, and in which they saw for themselves an important role. An overview of our poetry shows a consistent concern for school matters and for the transmission of knowledge. There is the grand project of Psellos, who summarized every discipline in poems hundreds of verses long; there are the militant poems of Christophoros in defence of or attacking certain Constantinopolitan teachers; there is the self-representative image of Mauropous as an important and successful teacher; and there are the poems of Niketas of Herakleia that read as versified oral lessons in a lively classroom setting.

This chapter will deal with the different ways in which poetry and education interact. It discusses the ways in which the teaching of poetry and the writing of poetry are intertwined, arguing that some of our poems are nothing less or more than preparatory exercises. Since poetry was apparently seen as an apt medium for the transmission of knowledge, I will also focus on didactic poetry, examining its circulation, its adoption of an unusual metre, and its communicative patterns, relating these to Psellos' self-representation towards his imperial patrons and towards the broader audience of his students.

## 6.1. LEARNING POETRY AT SCHOOL

## 6.1.1. Schools in eleventh-century Byzantium

An obstinate tendency to impose our own conceptions of education on the Byzantine school system has caused some misunderstandings about education in eleventh-century Byzantium. Many studies on Byzantine education are still caught up in the idea that the educational system in Byzantium has been preserved unchanged from (Late) Antiquity. Monomachos' foundation at St George of Mangana is in this context considered as a renewal of 'the University', and, hence, as the state-financed *nucleus* of teaching and research. Psellos' appointment as 'consul of philosophers', likewise, is seen as the election to a 'chair of Professor of Philosophy'. As a result, tensions in eleventh-century education are explained as conflict between a conservative Church and a more progressive University over intellectual precedence.<sup>1</sup> Many modern accounts also seem to take it for granted that there was a neat separation between academic education and schooling on a secondary level, a separation that would correspond to the advancement from 'rhetoric' to 'philosophy'.

Other studies, notably those of Weiss, Speck, and Lemerle, have taken a more critical look at the sources. They examined Byzantine education in its particular medieval context, which proved to be more complicated.<sup>2</sup> It is remarkable that these studies, all of them rigorous, essentially also supporting each other, and none seriously contested,

<sup>1</sup> See for example P. Agapitos, 'Teachers, Pupils, and Imperial Power in Eleventh-century Byzantium', in: Y. L. Too and K. Livingstone (eds), *Pedagogy and Power* (Cambridge 1998), 170–91; and K. Metzler, 'Pagane Bildung in christlichen Byzanz: Basileios von Kaisareia, Michael Psellos und Theodoros Metochites', in: M. Grünbart (ed.), *Theatron. Rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter* (Berlin/New York 2007), 287–305.

<sup>2</sup> G. Weiss, *Oströmische Beamte im Spiegel der Schriften des Michael Psellos* (Munich 1973); P. Speck, *Die Kaiserliche Universität von Konstantinopel* (Munich 1974); P. Lemerle, '«Le gouvernement des philosophes»: notes et remarques sur l'enseignement, les écoles, la culture', in: *Cinq études sur le XIe siècle byzantin* (Paris 1977), 195–248. V. Katsaros, 'Προδρομικοί θεσμοί για την οργάνωση της ανωτέρας εκπαίδευσης της εποχής των Κομνηνών από την προκομνηνεα περίοδο', in: V. Vlysidou (ed.), *Η αυτοκρατορία σε κρίση (;) Το Βυζάντιο τον 11ο αιώνα (1025–1081)* (Athens 2003), 443–71 critically reconsiders the traditional tenets of research, but does retain the separation between secular and religious education, and between secondary and higher education.

have not substantially changed the *communis opinio* on Byzantine education. To start with, they point out that the difference between secondary education and higher education was not so well defined, and may even not have existed at all.<sup>3</sup> They question the existence of a foundation of a School of Philosophy in the eleventh century, for which there is no trace of direct evidence.<sup>4</sup> The 'Patriarchal School' was a scholarly chimaera as far as the eleventh century is concerned.<sup>5</sup> The foundation of the Law School was an entirely private initiative of Monomachos, and was so short-lived that it cannot have influenced the educational system significantly. The *Neara*, the document drafted by Mauropous regulating the conditions in the School of Law established at Mangana, is not a general reform of education<sup>6</sup> but a foundation document. Psellos' function of 'consul of philosophers' perhaps gave him some supervisory power over other teachers, which is reflected in a letter in answer to the teacher of Chalkoprateia who demanded more material means, but this letter may reflect an exceptional gift rather than an institutional subsidy.<sup>7</sup> Be that as it may, Psellos certainly dominated educational life during a certain period in the 40s of the eleventh century, and his title of *hypatos ton filosofon* likely reflects this in some way or another.<sup>8</sup>

Instead, the main form of educational organization was the private school, or the private teacher. The schools were nearly all connected to a monastic centre, which is reflected in their name, but they were not monastic institutions (in any case, they did not only educate future monks). I cannot find any indication that secular and religious education would have been strictly separated, and Psellos' many

<sup>3</sup> Weiss, *Oströmische Beamte*, 65–7; Lemerle, *Cinq études*, 243: 'Rien n'autorise à penser qu'une école supérieure, d'Etat, du niveau que nous dirions 'universitaire', ait alors existé.'

<sup>4</sup> Weiss, *Oströmische Beamte*, 67–76; Lemerle, *Cinq études*, 223–7.

<sup>5</sup> Katsaros, 'Προδρομικοί θεσμοί', 446.

<sup>6</sup> As it is represented in e.g. M. Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025–1204. A Political History* (London/New York 1997<sup>2</sup>), 65–7.

<sup>7</sup> Psellos, *Ep. Sathas* 168. See also Lemerle, *Cinq études*, 226.

<sup>8</sup> Especially Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.*, 433–4 and Mauropous, *Ep.* 23 seem to point to this. The bibliography on the subject is extensive and does not agree on many points (especially the degree of imperial involvement and the official character of Psellos' function). See most recently J.-C. Riedinger, 'Quatre étapes de la vie de Michel Psellos', *REB* 68 (2010), 5–60, here 40–6. W. Wolska-Conus, 'Les écoles de Psellos et de Xiphilinos sous Constantin IX Monomaque', *TM* 6 (1976), 223–43, sees a feud between Xiphilinos' and Psellos' students, which, to my view, misunderstands the metaphorical language in Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.*

didactic works make it abundantly clear that he taught both what we would call philosophy and theology. It also seems that, contrary to what was thought before, these schools were not controlled by the imperial court or by the patriarch.<sup>9</sup> They were independent institutions, centred around the charismatic figure of a single teacher, or perhaps a small number of teachers: the *maïstor*, assisted by a *proximos* or by selected students.<sup>10</sup> We have evidence of at least seven schools in our period; some of them had already been in existence for centuries.<sup>11</sup>

The association of schools with monasteries has some obvious advantages. It seems logical, for instance, that the library of a monastery would be shared with that of the school, or that the *maïstor* would have access to it. Some manuscripts were also directly copied in the school, as some notices make clear.<sup>12</sup> Access to books was not widespread, and therefore the teacher was in a unique position, acting as a mediator of sometimes recondite knowledge.

Our evidence is not clear about the internal organization of education, only vaguely mentioning procedures used for election to a teaching chair. The word ‘throne’ (*θρόνος*) is mostly used in contemporary sources for a teaching chair, but it is doubtful whether this refers to an officially sanctioned state position or merely the informal consent to the right to teach. The assumption of the teaching profession seems to have been regulated in some way, and many sources refer to a certain hierarchy among teachers.<sup>13</sup> Even Symeon the New Theologian, for all his anti-intellectualism, held it as normal that not just anyone could assume the role of teacher and speak in public.<sup>14</sup> It was clearly a position of renown and prestige. Ultimately, a teacher always depended for his influence and income on his pupils. Even the *Neara* does not exclude that the *nomophylax* might accept some extra fees from pupils who are particularly well off (§14).

<sup>9</sup> Speck, *Kaiserliche Universität*, 35, 89–90; Weiss, *Oströmische Beamte*, 65–7.

<sup>10</sup> A. Markopoulos, ‘De la structure de l’école byzantine. Le maître, les livres et le processus éducatif’, in: B. Mondrain (ed.), *Lire et écrire à Byzance* (Paris 2006), 85–96.

<sup>11</sup> The most extensive overview in Lemerle, *Cinq études*, 227–35.

<sup>12</sup> Lemerle, *Cinq études*, 231 about the school of St Peter.

<sup>13</sup> For example, Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.*, p. 433, and Psellos, *Or. fun. in Nicetam*, §11.

<sup>14</sup> Symeon Neos Theologos, *Chapitres théologiques, gnostiques et pratiques*, ed. J. Darrouzès (Paris 1957), nr. 18, l. 240–3.

To this may be added the fact that teachers entertained a relationship of friendship with their pupils. In the competitive world of Constantinopolitan schools, they formed a group bound by solidarity. And this solidarity did not stop at the school gates: it was expected that pupils would fulfil their obligations towards their former teachers in later life. In return, a teacher with much influence (Psellos is an eminent example) could help his pupils with recommendations or advice.

### 6.1.2. The teaching of poetry

Poetry was traditionally a subject treated during the first years of education, taught by the *γραμματικός*.<sup>15</sup> The Homeric poems were obviously the central text at this stage. They served to instruct pupils in grammar, supplemented by an amalgam of traditional philological knowledge, such as metrics, history, biography, mythology, etc.

Contemporaries looked with condescension upon this 'poetic' stage of education. Ioannes Doxapatres opens his commentary on the *Progymnasmata* of Aphthonios by describing the awe and trepidation of students passing from poetry and the 'teratology' that accompanied it to the much more formidable and renowned discipline of rhetoric.<sup>16</sup> The same trepidation was also felt by Psellos, who relates that as a student he was 'delivered from hearing the poems, and looked forward to the art of words with grace'.<sup>17</sup> It also emerges from Doxapatres' phrasing that poetry has a connection with mythology.

The connotation of juvenility seems to have been responsible for evaluations of poetry (in its quality as an educational subject) as an inferior discipline. When describing the situation of education in his funeral oration for Xiphilinos, Psellos says that there were 'revered thrones not only for the ordinary discipline of poetry, but also for

<sup>15</sup> P. Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin. Notes et remarques sur enseignement et culture à Byzance des origines au Xe siècle* (Paris 1971), 253; R. Browning, 'Teachers', in: G. Cavallo (ed.), *The Byzantines* (Chicago 1997), 95–116, here at 97; Markopoulos, 'De la structure de l'école', 89.

<sup>16</sup> Ioannes Doxapatres, *Commentarii in Aphthonii progymnasmata*, ed. C. Walz, in: *Rhetores Graeci* (Stuttgart 1832–6), vol. II, 81.5–14.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Psellos, *Oratio funebris in matrem*, ed. U. Criscuolo, *Autobiografia. Encomio per la madre* (Napels 1989), l. 841–2: ἀρτι τοῦ ποιημάτων ἀκούειν ἀπαλλαγείς καὶ παρακύψας εἰς τὴν τῶν λόγων τέχνην σὺν χάριτι.



rhetoric and for astounding philosophy.<sup>18</sup> The word *πάνδημος* that qualifies poetry here can mean ‘common’, ‘popular’, and has decidedly a pejorative connotation. It serves as a contrast to philosophy, which is considered by Psellos as the pre-eminent discipline.

A letter of Mauropous addressed to a student begins as follows:

*What sort of grammarian do we now have among us, and of what style? Is he Sophoclean? Or by now Aristophanic? I at least would have preferred him to be Aratean, and would have liked to hear that he is even more advanced than that and closer to the completion of his schooling.*<sup>19</sup>

This probably reflects a development in authors or subjects treated in the curriculum, from tragedy (Sophocles), through comedy (Aristophanes), to didactic poetry (Aratos). Even then, poetry as a whole is considered as only a preparatory phase of the curriculum, for Mauropous urges that the student leave poets behind and proceed to the completion of the *enkuklios paideia*. Mauropous thereafter advises his friend to pursue his studies eagerly in order to attain his ultimate goal, and to engage in depth with every subject, thus avoiding ‘clinging only to the *schedos*, for instance, or only poetry or another subject of learning, when there are so many, and disregarding other subjects’.<sup>20</sup> *Schedos* and poetry are not fortuitously chosen as examples of subjects that do not require long or engaged study. Mauropous wants his pupil to put his mind to more substantial subjects. *Schedos* and poetry, both dealt with at the beginning of the curriculum, are considered easy and playful; more serious matters lay

<sup>18</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.*, 433.3–5: *σεμνοὶ θρόνοι καθίστασαν οὐ τῆς πανδήμου μόνης ποιητικῆς, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς τῶν λόγων τέχνης καὶ τῆς θαυμασιωτάτης φιλοσοφίας.*

<sup>19</sup> Mauropous, *Ep.* 74.1–5: *Ποταπὸς ἡμῖν ἄρα καὶ τίς ὁ γραμματικὸς; πότερον Σοφοκλείος ἢ Ἀριστοφάνειος ἦδη; ὡς ἔγωγε βουλομένη ἂν καὶ Ἀράτειον ἢ καὶ ἔτι προσωτέρω τοῦτον ἀκούσαι καὶ μᾶλλον ἐγγυτέρω τοῦ τέλους τῆς ἐγκυκλίου.* Translation from Karpozilos, *The Letters*, 188. See also N. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium*. 2nd edn (London 1996), 152–3.

<sup>20</sup> Mauropous, *Ep.* 74.11–15: *τὰ δὲ τῆς προκοπῆς μὴ εἰς μῆκος ἀπλατῆς προχωρεῖτω σοι (...), ὥστε μόνου τοῦ σχεδου, φέρε εἰπεῖν, ἢ τῶν ποιημάτων σε μόνον ἢ καὶ ἄλλον μέρους ἐνός τινος τῶν τῆς παιδείσεως ἔχεσθαι, οὕτως ὄντων πολλῶν, καταφρονεῖν δὲ τῶν ἄλλων.* Translation adapted from Karpozilos, *The Letters*, 190. Karpozilos inferred from this letter that Mauropous’ stance towards the *schedos* was negative; see A. Karpozilos, *Συμβολή στη μελέτη του βίου και του έργου του Ιωάννη Μαυρόποδος* (Ioannina 1982), 27. I find this difficult to agree with, not least because Mauropous would then also generally condemn poetry, a discipline he cultivated; see also below, 262–6 for this question.

ahead. The instruction of poetry appears in these accounts as a necessary step in the educational curriculum, but at the same time as a juvenile thing, decidedly inferior to rhetorical education.

What precisely were the content and scope of the teaching of poetry? On this question, we are mostly left in the dark. The most extensive contemporary account of the activities of a grammarian and his teaching of poetry is to be found in Psellos' funeral oration for Niketas, his friend and former fellow student.<sup>21</sup> This Niketas was a teacher at the school of Saint Peter. Psellos tells how Niketas taught the alphabet, orthography, morphology, syntax, and also poetry. Niketas' method of reading Homeric poems is described in detail. Niketas' reading is allegorizing:<sup>22</sup> under their improper appearance, the Homeric poems concealed a secret truth related to the Christian message of salvation. Psellos adds, interestingly, that, unlike the others, Niketas did not yield to the charms of style and metre, but concentrated only on the hidden message. Whether we can conclude from this that the other teachers of poetry did pay attention to more formal and stylistic features is difficult to say.<sup>23</sup>

Psellos also taught poetry. His exegetical interpretations of Homeric passages are collected in the *Philosophica minora* (vol. I, opusc. 42–8). These texts are addressed to Psellos' students. Their interpretative method is in line with the allegorical and Christianizing interpretations of Niketas. Psellos claims that his goal is 'to turn a short Hellenic myth, totally out of tune with our doctrines, into a more divine form'.<sup>24</sup> These pieces also bear the name ἀλληγορία in the title of the manuscript. No information about specific views on poetry can be extracted, and only in op. 48 do we discern a certain kind of rhetorical description instead of allegorical exegesis. Again, the puerile character of poetry and its association with mythology are apparent: in the prologue to op. 43, Psellos was (or feigned to be)

<sup>21</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. in Nicetam*. The editor, Anna Maria Guglielmino, proposes to identify this Niketas with Niketas of Herakleia, an identification that must be dismissed, see A. Sideras, *Die byzantinischen Grabreden* (Vienna 1994), 142.

<sup>22</sup> Agapitos, 'Teachers, Pupils and Imperial Power', 180; Wilson, *Scholars*, 149–50.

<sup>23</sup> R. Browning, 'Homer in Byzantium', *Viator* 6 (1975), 15–33, at 25, considers the exegetical activity of Niketas and Psellos as a rather unusual phenomenon.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Psellos, *Philosophica minora*, ed. J. Duffy, vol. I. *Opuscula logica, physica, allegorica, alia* (Leipzig/Stuttgart 1992), 42.16–18: βραχὺν τινα μῦθον Ἑλληνικὸν καὶ πάντῃ τοῖς ἡμετέροις λόγοις ἀπάδοντα εἰς τὴν θειοτέραν ἰδέαν μεταποιήσωμεν.

rather reluctant to enter upon such a playful subject, but ‘a philosopher needs to love myths from time to time and occupy himself seriously with playful things’.<sup>25</sup>

Another text that reflects Psellos’ teaching on poetry is his poem on grammar (poem 6), which draws heavily on ancient material, especially grammatical and metrical treatises. There are nevertheless some idiosyncrasies, and it is interesting to see what place Psellos reserves for poetry. Poetry is treated after an overview of the tenses and defective verbs, and before explaining the breathings (vv. 92–100). In sum, it forms part of elementary grammar. In essence, Psellos’ verses are simply a list of which metrical feet to adopt and which to avoid. He advises the composition of iambs and hexameters, which of course tallies with the metres still extensively used by the Byzantines. As for composing iambic trimeters, he suggests to use spondees often (v. 99). This is probably a reflection of the Byzantine habit not to apply resolution to metrical feet in an iambic trimeter, a habit by which effectively more spondees are created. Here Psellos, in agreement with many Byzantine treatises, presumes that the Byzantine versions of ancient metres were still based on the ancient prosodical feet. At the same time, he limits the possible metrical schemes of the iambic trimeter to those that are used in the Byzantine dodecasyllable; this is also in line with the content of many Byzantine metrical treatises.<sup>26</sup> It can be concluded that while students had to digest a great deal of ancient metrical lore, for the greatest part irrelevant, there was an emphasis on those metrical forms still actively used. Besides this, it should not surprise us that, while the poem is in political verse, this metre is not mentioned at all: this is simply not the metre to be learnt at school, but a metre growing in and through cultural practice uninfluenced by knowledge gained at school (at least, by written knowledge).

The poem on grammar is dedicated to the emperor Michael Doukas, and it is also about this imperial pupil that Psellos says in the *Chronographia* that he taught him how to write poetry, a

<sup>25</sup> Psellos, *Philosophica minora I* (ed. Duffy), 43.8–11: *δεῖ γὰρ τὸν φιλόσοφον (...)* καὶ φιλόμυθον εἶναι ποτε καὶ σπουδάζειν περὶ τὰ παίγνια.

<sup>26</sup> For the gap between theory and practice in Byzantine metrical treatises, see W. Hörandner, ‘Beobachtungen zur Literaturästhetik der Byzantiner. Einige byzantinische Zeugnisse zu Metrik und Rhythmik’, *BSI* 56 (1995), 279–90; and M. Lauxtermann, ‘The Velocity of Pure Iambs. Byzantine Observations on the Metre and Rhythm of the Dodecasyllable’, *JÖB* 48 (1998), 9–33.

testimony supported by a remark in Scylitzes Continuatus.<sup>27</sup> Psellos' account implies (although the text is not clear) that Michael himself improvised iambs, although they contained metrical flaws. Both the poem and the historical sources show that the prospective pupil was expected to compose poetry.

Apart from these indirect testimonies, we also have more tangible remains of teaching of poetry: manuscripts with educational material. We have already made the observation that the greatest part of manuscripts of the *Iliad*, for instance, contain scholia, likely to be used in a school context (see above, 66). The scholia, adopted from ancient sources, comment on mythological, etymological, grammatical, sometimes rhetorical, and other miscellaneous features.<sup>28</sup> They do not delve into the kinds of allegorical explanations Psellos does and Niketas is said to do. In the eleventh-century *Iliad* manuscript *Escor. gr. Q I 12*,<sup>29</sup> the folia have two columns: the left one exhibits the text of the *Iliad*, while the right one contains a paraphrase. The upper parts of the folia, as well as other free space, are filled with scholia (ancient as well as newer exegetical ones), referring to the text with asterisks and other signs. This juxtalinear outlook may indicate an educational destination.<sup>30</sup>

Other manuscripts used by grammarians may also shed light on the function of composing poetry at school. I will take as an example one of the most representative of these manuscripts, *Leid. Voss. Q 76*, an eleventh-century manuscript.<sup>31</sup> The manuscript is very similar to others that can be dated to around the same period, such as *Monac. gr. 310* and *Grottaferrata Z a III*.<sup>32</sup> The manuscript contains various grammatical works, such as the *Ars* of Dionysius Thrax, the *Canones*

<sup>27</sup> See above, 36–7.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. H. Erbse, *Scholia graeca in Homeri iliadem* (Berlin 1969), xvii–xix: the exegetical scholia of the family b all go back to four extant eleventh-century manuscripts, so we may presume that this kind of scholia was much used and copied, if not complemented, in the eleventh century. Erbse supposes that these scholia go back to examples of the first century BC, see Erbse, *Scholia*, xii–xiii.

<sup>29</sup> For Byzantine manuscripts of Homer, the most up-to-date materials (complete with images of the manuscripts) are to be found on the website of the *Homer Multitext Project*, <<http://www.homermultitext.org> (accessed 06/01/2012)>.

<sup>30</sup> A. Dain, 'A propos de l'étude des poètes anciens à Byzance', in: *Studi in onore di Ugo Enrico Paoli* (Florence 1961), 195–201, here at 196.

<sup>31</sup> A detailed description in: G. Uhlig, *Appendix artis Dionysii Thracis* (Leipzig 1881), xix–xxx; see also K. A. de Meyier, *Codices vossiani graeci et miscellanei* (Leiden 1955), 192–6.

<sup>32</sup> Uhlig, *Appendix*, xi–xix.

of Theodosius, and *On tropes* by George Choïroboskos. These are accompanied by various prolegomena and scholia, and also some shorter metrical treatises. This additional material also turns up in some other similar manuscripts, so it is by no means unique to the *Vossianus*.

The didactic material in the *Vossianus* is organized as a progressive initiation into the subject of grammar. After some introductory texts, which we will look at in a moment, the book deals with the alphabet (fol. 12–17) and diacritic signs (fol. 17–20). This is followed by elementary explanations about letters and syllables (fol. 20–8), a general introduction to the subject of grammar (fol. 28–54; cf. *infra* for this interesting treatise), and the basics of syntax (fol. 54–71). Then come poetry and metrics (fol. 71–85), and dialectology (fol. 87–94). There is also a large section on morphology (fol. 95–203), which opens with a conjugation table of *τύπτω*, and includes specialized orthographic treatises about more recondite matters such as accents, pronomina, and the length of the vowels called *dichrona*. The book closes with the treatise of George Choïroboskos on tropes, in this way providing a launch pad into rhetoric. In sum, the manuscript reads like a grammarian's manual, dealing with subjects in progressive order; in such a progression, poetry has a place between purely grammatical subjects.

The introductory material at the beginning of the manuscript consists of poetry, and, surprisingly perhaps, of rather recent poetry. There is first an iambic poem of Gregory of Nazianzos (I,2,30; *PG* 37.908–10), giving moral advice in the form of an alphabetic acrostic.<sup>33</sup> The title in the manuscript emphasizes that the poem contains 'perfect moral advice' (*τελείαν παραίνεσιν*). It is followed by a very similar poem, also ascribed to Gregory, addressing a pupil (see vv. 11 *τέκνον*, 24 *ὦ παῖ*).<sup>34</sup> A third poem, by the ninth-century poet Ignatios the Deacon, is an iambic alphabetic poem with paraenetical content.<sup>35</sup> This poem is written from the perspective of a preceptor giving advice to a young student, urging him to hold Christ in his thoughts,

<sup>33</sup> See D. Anastasijewić, *Die paränetischen Alphabete in der griechischen Literatur* (Munich 1905), 14–21.

<sup>34</sup> Edition in I. Sakkelion and A. I. Sakkelion, *Κατάλογος τῶν χειρογράφων τῆς Ἐθνικῆς Βιβλιοθήκης τῆς Ἑλλάδος* (Athens 1892), 18–19. See Anastasijewić, *Alphabete*, 21–4.

<sup>35</sup> Edition in C. Fr. Müller, 'Ignatii Diaconi acrostichon alphabeticum', *Rheinisches Museum* 46 (1891), 320–3. See also Anastasijewić, *Alphabete*, 32–4.

to put effort into his studies, and to behave humbly toward his teachers. The second poem by Gregory and the poem of Ignatios are also present in *Grottaferrata Z a III* (as well as in other, later, manuscripts).<sup>36</sup>

One might wonder what use these texts could have. Was the teacher to read them aloud in front of his pupils, imparting them with admonitions relevant to a classroom context? Were the pupils to know these poems by heart, thereby aided by the alphabetic structure? Were they only an introduction to the alphabet, the next element treated in the manuscript, and, one could surmise, in the grammarian's courses? It is likely that they served as a combination of all this.

The metrical treatises that appear in the *Vossianus* (fol. 71–85) were obviously relevant to the teaching practice of a grammarian. General observations about Byzantine metrical treatises of course also apply to these: this is traditional theoretical material rather than a description of contemporary practice. However, they are not deprived of practical applicability. The metres under review are iambs, hexameters, elegiacs, and anacreontics, the four metres still used by contemporaries, in decreasing order of frequency. Moreover, the treatise in the *Vossianus* on the iambic trimeter<sup>37</sup> makes a distinction between the 'iambs used by the ancients' and 'pure iambs' (*καθαροὶ ἴαμβοι*); that is, the unresolved dodecasyllable used by the Byzantines, always counting twelve syllables.<sup>38</sup>

The prolegomena to Dionysios' *Ars* (fol. 47–50) also deserve our attention. They are edited in the *Grammatici Graeci* as the *prolegomena Vossiana*,<sup>39</sup> because the *Vossianus* is the oldest manuscript to contain them. This text is a very general introduction, giving definitions of grammar and related ideas. Of special importance is a section that argues that grammar partakes of all kinds of disciplines: theoretical, practical, and creative (*ποιητική*). This division of disciplines goes back to Aristotle, and was mentioned at the beginning of the treatise. The word *ποιητικός*, apart from meaning 'creative', is here also connected to its narrower meaning, that of 'poetic':

<sup>36</sup> Uhlig, *Appendix*, xii.

<sup>37</sup> Edited in M. Conbruch (ed.), *Hephaestionis Enchiridion cum commentariis veteribus* (Leipzig 1906), 309–10.

<sup>38</sup> See for this 'pure iamb': Lauxtermann, 'Velocity'.

<sup>39</sup> A. Hilgard (ed.), *Scholias in Dionysii thracis artem grammaticam*. *Grammatici graeci* 1.3 (Leipzig 1901), 1–10.

*This discipline (grammar) is thus of a mixed kind; for when it tells stories to the youth, it partakes of the theoretical kind. When it takes the reed, adds diacritical signs and corrects the words that are not right, it partakes of the practical kind. Finally, it has something in common with the creative (ποιητικόν) kind, when it blends together the material of loose words, by means of art and metre, thus completing a perfect verse. Grammar is therefore in every respect a most useful art, both for rhetors and for philosophers.<sup>40</sup>*

The different aspects of the art of grammar are presented here. The first, ‘theoretical’ aspect refers to the teaching of Homer and other ancient poets. Second, as a ‘practical’ discipline, grammar involves orthography, and it is suggested that the pupils wrote texts themselves, which would then be corrected. Third, teaching in grammar includes exercises in the composition of poetry. It is difficult to say whether there is a deliberate pun on the double meaning of ποιητικός. This poetic writing is not a creative composition, as it appears, but rather an exercise in transforming, or paraphrasing, a prose text. Poetry is described as ‘bound speech’, as opposed to ‘loose speech’; that is, prose. For the teachers working with the *Vossianus*, it is the techniques of versification that are at the centre of the teaching of poetry.

The *Vossianus*, just like other treatises and summaries, passes in silence over the ‘Byzantine’, accentual, aspects of versification. Other forms of didactic material do the same. There are, for example, many poems that purport to teach versification, predominantly from later centuries. Psellos is said to be the author of such a poem about the iambic metre (Psellos 14 *De metro iambico*). However, the attribution to Psellos is far from certain: the oldest manuscript that contains the poem is from the fourteenth century, and false attributions to Psellos are frequent. The poem proclaims once more the ancient prosodic feet as the basic elements of the verse, but at the same time it prescribes that each verse should always contain twelve syllables. This number is hinted at by some riddle-like allusions: the number of feet should be the same as the number of legs of a bee, while the

<sup>40</sup> Hilgard (ed.), *Scholia*, 2, l. 10–16: αὐτὴ γὰρ τοῦ μικτοῦ εἴδους ἐστίν· ὅταν μὲν γὰρ τὰς ἱστορίας διηγῆται τοῖς νέοις, κοινῶν τῷ θεωρητικῷ, ὅταν δὲ κάλαμον λαβοῦσα στίξῃ καὶ διορθῶται τὰς μὴ εὐ ἐχούσας τῶν λέξεων, τῷ πρακτικῷ, τῷ δὲ ποιητικῷ, ὅταν τὴν ὕλην τῶν διαλελυμένων λέξεων τέχνη καὶ μέτρῳ συναρμόσῃ καὶ τέλειον στίχον ἀπεργάσῃται. Αὕτη τοίνυν ἡ γραμματικὴ χρησιμωτάτη ἐστίν ἐν ἅπασιν καὶ ῥήτορσι καὶ φιλοσόφοις.

syllables should equal the number of signs in the zodiac. All the same, we hear nothing about the Byzantine regulation of accents and caesurae, the rules of which can only be gained by empirical statistics.<sup>41</sup>

This can lead us to consider how the more practical side of versification was transmitted. The rules for accentuation are an important case in point. The accentual pattern in dodecasyllables was in practice quite strictly regulated. The paroxytonic verse end was seemingly compulsory. When we look at the exceptions listed by Maas, we see that Mauroπους and Christophoros are the first poets of an extensive corpus without a single exception to the rule of the paroxytonic verse end.<sup>42</sup> It is clearly a shared practice, governed by conventions if not rules.

On the other side of the metrical spectrum, prosody was also regulated by practical rules, although less strict than ancient rules. Since the difference between long and short vowels was no longer perceived by the Byzantines, the compliance to prosodical rules is a purely theoretical affair. When surveying the exceptions allowed, one begins to see some patterns, of which we find no trace in Byzantine metrical theory, and which have only been unveiled by patient philologists.<sup>43</sup> In the intricate matter of *dichrona*, it is notable that, apart from proper names and technical terms, a prolongation of a short *dichronum* vowel (*productio*) is allowed only when the word otherwise would not fit the prosodical structure of the iamb. Both Christophoros and Mauroπους observed this rule,<sup>44</sup> and an analysis of Psellos' poems shows that he does ignore this rule in the *ablaut*, but observes it quite painstakingly in inner-word vowels, although Westerink,<sup>45</sup> and recently Sarriù,<sup>46</sup> maintained that Psellos completely ignored the quantity of all *dichrona*.<sup>47</sup> Conversely, a shortening of a

<sup>41</sup> See the rules concerning accents and *Binnenschluss* explicated in P. Maas, 'Der byzantinische Zwölfsilber', *BZ* 12 (1903), 278–323.

<sup>42</sup> Maas, 'Zwölfsilber', 288–9, n. 2.

<sup>43</sup> F. Kuhn, *Symbolae ad doctrinae peri dichronon historiam pertinentes* (Wrocław (Breslau) 1892).

<sup>44</sup> Kuhn, *Symbolae*, 63–4. See also M. De Groote, 'The Metre in the Poems of Christopher Mitylenaios', *BZ* 103 (2011), 571–94, at 581–8.

<sup>45</sup> Westerink, *Poemata*, xxxix: 'dichrona . . . ad libitum . . . usurpentur'.

<sup>46</sup> L. Sarriù, 'Metrica e stile nei dodecasillabi di Michele Psello', *Quaderni del Dipartimento di Filologia, Linguistica e Tradizione classica "Augusto Rostagni" dell'Università degli Studi di Torino* 2 (2003), 293–306, at 293.

<sup>47</sup> I count in Psellos' 2743 dodecasyllables only nine infringements of this rule.



long *dichronum* vowel (*correptio*) is always allowed, even when the graphic image makes it clear that it is a long vowel.<sup>48</sup>

We may ask ourselves how these prosodical patterns and accentual rules could gain widespread acceptance if there were apparently no manuals at hand. Versification was probably predominantly a practical skill transmitted by the teacher by giving examples, perhaps copied or imitated by pupils.<sup>49</sup> We may therefore suggest that young Byzantines learnt to write by imitating model texts, including texts written by their teacher.

### 6.1.3. Poetic exercises

If pupils learnt to compose poetry at school, can we then suppose that some of these compositions are still present among extant poetry? Can we suppose, in the case of some texts, that their content cannot be taken at face value, but that they were nothing more than preparatory exercises, meant for the safe and playful world of the classroom, especially those texts that show a high degree of imitation of school authors? Final answers to these questions are impossible, but I would argue that this hypothesis cannot always be excluded.

Let us begin by looking at some writings which were composed by teachers and are very explicit about their propaedeutic, and hence not directly applicable, character. Some of Psellos' rhetorical compositions leave no doubt about the fact that they are sophistic showpieces without any serious relationship to reality. His encomia on the flea, louse, and bedbug (*Or. min.* 26–8) are such 'epideictic' works, composed by the teacher in order to provide pupils with a suitable example, see above, 174.

There is also an epitaph for the metropolitan of Melitene that is manifestly written for didactic purposes, although on the surface it did have a social applicability. The oration begins with this address to his students:

*It is not because you want to bring honour to the recently deceased metropolitan of Melitene that you ask me for an encomium, it seems to me, but in order to have an example of the way a panegyric oration*

<sup>48</sup> Kuhn, *Symbolae*, 78–9. Examples also abound in Psellos.

<sup>49</sup> Hörandner, 'Beobachtungen zur Literarästhetik', 286, suggesting oral transmission of accent regulations.

should be composed. The latter aspect you have concealed, the former professed, in order to obtain, under the respectful mask of your request, two things: first, reverence for the deceased; and, second, the art of eloquence.<sup>50</sup>

It seems that Psellos wanted to kill two birds with one stone. The oration does bring honour to the metropolitan, but it is first and foremost a model piece. Since, as he avows at the beginning of the oration, he really does not know much about the metropolitan's life, this is a convenient chance to demonstrate and teach some techniques of an improvised oration, without running the risk of being held liable for factual errors. The oration is thus reference material, a supply of ideas and techniques from which to learn (l. 3: ἀφορμάς, l. 18: πόρισμα).

This permits us to reiterate a thesis already formulated above (123–4). Psellos' prominent position as an 'intellectual', a *logios*, required that he compose public orations on request for occasions that undeniably are of a real social significance. But these orations would be read attentively by his pupils and the whole intellectual community, who would assess them as a product of rhetorical technique. From this example, it is clear that pieces composed by the teacher served as classroom texts: they were templates that could be imitated by the pupils in their own writing.

In the funeral orations of Psellos for deceased students, he repeatedly mentions that these young men, when still pupils, composed works themselves. Psellos says of Romanos the *referendarios* that he composed one work after the other—naturally under the wise guidance of Psellos.<sup>51</sup> In the case of another pupil, the 'anonymous *patrikios*', the public can still admire his works. Some of them, according to Psellos, were only an ἀπόπειρα, a test, written to 'exercise himself'.<sup>52</sup> These texts clearly had only the status of a preparatory exercise.

<sup>50</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. Gautier* 1.1–6: Οὐ τὸν Μελιτηνῆς σεμνῶναι βουλόμενοι τὴν ἐνταῦθα μετῆλλαχότα ζωὴν, ὡς γέ μοι δοκεῖ, εἰς ἐκείνον αἰτεῖσθέ με ἐγκώμιον, ἀλλ' ἵν' ἔχοιτε ἀφορμάς τοῦ πῶς δεῖ τὸν πανηγυρικὸν μετεῖναι λόγον. Τοῦτο μὲν ἀποκεκρύφατε, ἐκείνο δὲ προβέβλησθε, ἵν' ἐν τῷ εὐσχήμονι τῆς αἰτήσεως δύο ταῦτα κερδάνητε, τό τε πρὸς τὸν ἀπεληλυθότα αἰδέσμον καὶ τὸ τῆν τέχνην ἔχειν.

<sup>51</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. Gautier* 4.40–50.

<sup>52</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. Gautier* 5.161–5: τὰ δὲ ἄλλως ἐκτεθέντα πρὸς γυμνασίαν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀπόπειραν.

Hence, keeping in mind that the context of school encouraged the composition of texts with such a preparatory status by teachers or students, I would like to reconsider the background of some of Christophoros' poems dealing with contemporary events. These are poem 8, on the death of Romanos, and poem 52, on the downfall of Michael V. These poems are traditionally interpreted as 'historical accounts', on a par with and compared to Psellos' narration of events.<sup>53</sup> According to these interpretations, the poems contain political or moralizing motifs, providing social critique and reflecting the political views of the poet.

Contemporary events, in fact, were a favourite material for schoolmasters to work with, and they were frequently used as the subjects of rhetorical exercises.<sup>54</sup> Probably this would have aroused the interest of the youth, but the realistic subject matter also prepared them for the kind of work they would be confronted with later. Browning suggested this in the case of some twelfth-century poetic exercises that were intertwined with *schedè* and composed by teachers.<sup>55</sup> Geometres also wrote *ethopoiiiai* inspired by actual events.<sup>56</sup>

The death of Michael V in particular, which forms the subject of Christophoros 52, was a popular subject for preparatory exercises at school.<sup>57</sup> Ioannes Doxapatres included such an exercise in the commentary on Aphthonios' *Progymnasmata*. The occasion of this exercise is a particular *progymnasma* of Aphthonios, an *ethopoia* entitled 'What would Niobe say when her children were lying dead?'<sup>58</sup>

<sup>53</sup> S. Lambakis, 'Η κρίσιμη επικαιρότητα του 11 αιώνα στην ποίηση της εποχής. Συγκρίσεις και παραλληλισμοί με τα ιστορικά κείμενα', in: *Η αυτοκρατορία σε κρίση* (:) *Το βυζάντιο του 11ου αιώνα (1025–1081)* (Athens 2003), 393–408; and U. Criscuolo, 'Sui carmina historica di Cristoforo di Mitilene', in: F. Conca and G. Fiaccadori (eds), *Bisanzio nell'età dei Macedoni. Forme della produzione letteraria e artistica. VIII Giornata di Studi bizantini* (Milano, 15–16 marzo 2005) (Milan 2007), 51–75.

<sup>54</sup> H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner* (Munich 1978), I, 114–16.

<sup>55</sup> R. Browning, 'Il codice marciano gr. XI.31 e la schedografia bizantina', in: *Miscellanea Marciana di studi bessarionei* (Padua 1976), 21–34, here at 22.

<sup>56</sup> One of Geometres' poems is an *ethopoia* of Nikephoros Phokas, see E. van Opstall (ed.), *Jean Géomètre. Poèmes en hexamètres et en distiques élégiaques* (Leiden 2008), poem 80; see also E. van Opstall, 'Poésie, rhétorique et mémoire littéraire chez Jean Géomètre...', in: P. Odorico, M. Hinterberger, and P. Agapitos (eds), «*Doux remède . . .*» *Poésie et poésie à Byzance. Actes du IVe colloque international philologique, Paris, 23–24–25 février 2006* (Paris 2008), 229–44, here at 236.

<sup>57</sup> C. Roueché, 'Rhetoric of Kekaumenos', in: E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Rhetoric in Byzantium* (Aldershot 2003), 23–37, here at 27, n. 16.

<sup>58</sup> Doxapatres, *Commentarii*, 505–8.

Doxapatres analyses Aphthonios' *progymnasma* on questions of genre, style, and invention. He then adds an *ethopoia* of his own, entitled *Τίνας ἂν εἶπη λόγους ὁ τῆς βασιλείας ἐκπεσὼν Μιχαήλ, τῶν βασιλείων ἀπελαυνόμενος* ('What would Michael have said, when he was deposed from the imperial throne and chased from the palace?').<sup>59</sup> This is a short lament in the first person, pronounced by Michael, who deplores his unexpected downfall from the imperial throne he had gained equally unexpectedly. Michael V's story has a similar status to a mythological subject: it only matters here for the sake of rhetorical technique.

Poem 52 of Christophoros not only deals with the same event, but also otherwise shows many signs of being a noncommittal exercise rather than a serious political pamphlet. The poem is written in hexameters and in Homeric language, which, as I would suggest tallies with a typical school context. The rhetorical structure of the piece makes it unsuitable for broad diffusion or public declamation: it is not a funeral poem proper, for it does not lament the dethronement of Michael V, but rather justifies it, relating in a dramatic manner the exile of the empress Zoe by Michael V and the subsequent riots in the capital, during which Michael was deposed and blinded. The opening *μέλλεν ἄρα* is typical for a monody, but the poem quickly switches from lament over the city to a vivid narration of the troubles (vv. 10–19), followed by accusations against Michael.

The poem teems with Homeric reminiscences and parallels. These have been described as a trait of 'classicism' in Christophoros.<sup>60</sup> But are these parallels only to be considered as allusive references, and hence as a game of cultural recognition? A detailed analysis of the technical aspects of this intertextual relation could lead to different conclusions.

The expression *φύλοπιν αἰνήν* (v. 2) is to be found sixteen times in Homer, always at the end of the verse, as in Christophoros' poem. The collocation *εἶδος ἀρίστης* (v. 4), four times in Homer, is also always found at the end if used in a feminine form. The expression *κουριδίην δ' ἄλοχον* (v. 7) has an exact correspondence in *Iliad* 7.392,

<sup>59</sup> Doxapatres, *Commentarii*, 508–9; it is disputed whether this *progymnasma* was authored by Doxapatres, see C. A. Gibson, 'The Anonymous *Progymnasmata* in John Doxapatres' *Homiliae in Aphthonium*', *BZ* 102 (2009), 83–94. The evidence for an anonymous authorship, however, is only indirect, and does not seem convincing to me.

<sup>60</sup> Crisculo, 'Carmina historica', 75.

where it occurs likewise at the beginning of the verse. The word group *κάλεον δέ μιν* (v. 8) corresponds with *κάλεόν τέ μιν* in *Il.* 23.203, in exactly the same *sedes* of the verse, at the fourth and fifth feet. The word group *παρθενίην ζώνην* (v. 9) likewise occurs at the same *sedes* (second to fourth foot) at *Odyssey* 11.245. The expression *μάχας τ' ἀνδροκτασίας τε* (12) takes over a half verse from *Il.* 7.237. *Λευγαλέους θανάτους* (13) is a fixed Homeric collocation, and *ἀλγεά τε στοναχάς τε* is adopted from the same place in the verse, in both *Il.* 2.39 and *Od.* 14.39. In verse 15, *ὄς ῥα κακῆ αἴση* is modelled on the metrical block *τῶ ῥα κακῆ αἴση*, found in *Il.* 5.209 and *Od.* 19.259, both times at the beginning of the verse, as in Christophoros' poem. The end of verse 16, *λάθετο συνθεσιάων*, is modelled on the end of *Il.* 5.319, *ἐλήθετο συνθεσιάων*. The place of the word *συμφράσσατο* (17) is in exactly the same *sedes* (fourth/fifth foot) as in the four Homeric verses where it also occurs; the same holds true for the words *οὐλομένην* (25; thrice in Homer; always at the beginning of the verse) and *ἄνασσειν* (26; four times, always at the end). The metrical place of the expression *βαρὺ στενάχων* (23; first to third foot) is identical to the position in the seven Homeric verses where it occurs. The word group *κείται δ' ἐν* + noun (see 25) appears also in Homer twice at the beginning of the verse (see *Il.* 4.143 and *Il.* 24.600).

All these parallels are drawn from various scenes in Homer, fighting scenes, domestic scenes, etc. It is in my opinion not the case that a knowledge of the Homeric context adds anything to the understanding, or literary enjoyment, of Christophoros' poems. Hence, instead of playing a sophisticated literary allusive game, I think that this poem mines the Homeric poems simply for reasons of versification, which is indicated by the exact verse–structural correspondences. In this way, Christophoros can make use of convenient metrical blocks which are already 'in place', ensuring a correct prosodical verse structure. Hence, my conclusion would be that the poem is an example of the kind of close imitation of a school author that leads to an exercise in Homeric metrics.

Continuing further upon this hypothesis, poem 8 may also display features of a school exercise, inspired by the event of the emperor Romanos III's death, in 1034. The poem, numbering thirty-two dactylic hexameters, is entitled *Εἰς τὸν βασιλέα Ῥωμανόν· ἐπιτάφια ἠρωϊκά*. It opens as a lament on the fate of Romanos, but quickly shifts to a narrative of his death, attributing a somewhat ambiguous role to Zoe, Romanos' wife, who, according to rumours, had her

husband murdered to help her lover ascend the throne as the emperor Michael IV. Whether the account indicates critique or loyalty towards Zoe is a matter of debate.<sup>61</sup> The poem ends with a description of the reaction of the people to the burial of the old emperor. The representation of the crowd's indifference agrees remarkably well with Psellos' account in the *Chronographia*,<sup>62</sup> and adds a surprising *pointe* to the poem (vv. 29–32):

προύπεμπον δὲ ἄνακτα κατὰ πόλιν οἴπερ ἄριστοι  
 αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ ῥ' ἱκανόν γε Περιβλέπτου ἐνὶ νηῶ,  
 ἐνθάδε ταρχύσαντο νέκυν βασιλῆος ἀγαυοῦ,  
 βὰν δ' ἐπ' ἄνακτα νέον καὶ Ῥωμανοῦ ἐξέλαθοντο.

*The best men accompanied the emperor through the city.  
 But when they reached the church of Peribleptos,  
 they buried the body of the valiant emperor,  
 and flocked to the new emperor, forgetting about Romanos.*

This poem is strikingly critical of the new rulers, not only by implicitly suggesting that they are somehow involved in the death (elsewhere in the poem), but even more by suggesting that their popularity was gained at the expense of an immoral neglect of Romanos' memory. It also accuses the elite (29: οἴπερ ἄριστοι) of being forgetful of their deceased emperor. Moreover, this poem does not have the rhetorical structure of a funeral oration. After introducing a *gnomè* (emperors are also mortal), and addressing the deceased (from v. 3), it proceeds abruptly to the narration of the death, omitting any praise of or biographic detail about the emperor, and it ends with the ignominious reaction of the prominent Constantinopolitans, rather than the conventional consolation. This is not a rhetorical piece suitable for public pronouncement or diffusion.

Just as with poem 52, the poem seems rather to be an exercise in Homeric versification. Again, we see that Homeric formulae are seamlessly integrated into the text. The address *κοίρανε λαῶν* (v. 4) is one such formula (cf. *Il.* 7.234 and elsewhere, in total four times); another is *θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι* (v. 6; occurs eight times in Homer, both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*), and *ὄσσε φαεινῶ* (v. 15, cf. *Il.* 13.3 and

<sup>61</sup> Criscuolo, 'Carmina historica', 60 sees a veiled accusation laid at the door of Zoe; Crimi, *Canzoniere*, 55, in contrast, observes an implicit admiration for Zoe, which indicates the poet's loyalty.

<sup>62</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book IV, §2.

elsewhere, in total six times). The expression *οἴπερ ἄριστοι* is also to be found in *Il.* 17.509. Christophoros places each of these formulae at the end of the verse, just as in the Homeric example. Some other collocations are also adopted by Christophoros, such as *βῆ δ' ἰέναι* (v. 17, very frequent in Homer). This formula is mostly found at the beginning of the verse in the Homeric poems; Christophoros duly follows custom. One may also note that *αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ ῥ' ἴκανον* (v. 30) mirrors closely the Homeric formula *ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ ῥ' ἴκανον*. Again, the verb *ἴκανον* is in exactly the same *sedes* of the verse.

Some other verses are entirely modelled on existing verses from the Homeric poems. Verse 7 *ὦ μοι ἅπαντα ἄφνω θάνατος μέλας ἀμφεκάλυψεν* resembles *Od.* 4.180: *πρὶν γ' ὅτε δὴ θανάτοιο μέλαν νέφος ἀμφεκάλυψεν*. Verse 9 *αὐτὸς δ' ἐξερῶ πικρὸν μόρον, ὄνπερ ὑπέστη* is modelled after *Od.* 9.365: *ἐξερῶ· σὺ δέ μοι δὸς ξείνιον, ὡς περ ὑπέστης*. Christophoros adopts the verb *ἐξερῶ*, but, on the basis of the Homeric verse, he also adopts the expression *ὡς περ ὑπέστης* at the same place in the line, slightly modifying it to suit the meaning. I would take this verse as an example to demonstrate that Christophoros does not imitate the Homeric poems in an effort to construct an allusion to its source text. Odysseus' cunning answer to the Cyclops' demand for his name bears no relation whatsoever to the narration of Michael's fate that the I-voice in Christophoros' poem begins. Moreover, the verb *ὑφίστημι* is used in a totally different sense: 'withstand' in Christophoros (of a fate), 'promise' in Homer (by Odysseus to tell his name). In other words, there is no surplus meaning for the reader if he is aware of the context of these words in the source text. The expression *ὄνπερ ὑπέστη* turns up again in verse 18. This verse, *δεσποίνῃ ἐρέων πόσιος μόρον, ὄνπερ ὑπέστη*, is clearly inspired by *Od.* 23.2: *δεσποίνῃ ἐρέουσα φίλον πόσιν ἐνδον ἐόντα*, but here too the context is totally different: on the one hand, Eurykleia bringing Penelope the happy message that Odysseus has arrived; on the other, a servant announcing the death of a husband. Verse 22 is almost identical with *Il.* 10.15: *πολλὰς ἐκ κεφαλῆς προθελύμους ἔλκετο χαίτας*. Verse 27, *κεῖτο μέγας μεγαλωστί λελασμένος ἦς ἔχε δόξης*, mirrors *Il.* 16.776 and *Od.* 24.40 *κεῖτο* (resp. *κείσο*) *μέγας μεγαλωστί, λελασμένος ἵπποσυνάων*.

The same *cento* technique is also used in the poem *Εἰς τὸν Μανιάκην περὶ τοῦ μούλτου* ('On Maniakes about the rebellion'), a

poem of exactly one hundred verses.<sup>63</sup> The poem consists almost entirely of Homeric verses or parts of verses. It even has some verses in common with poems 8 and 52 (compare v. 95 with 8.27), which provides further arguments for Christophoros' authorship. Likewise, it has a contemporary event as its subject, this time the rebellion and death of Georgios Maniakes in 1043, at the beginning of Monomachos' reign. The poem portrays Maniakes as a Homeric hero, and the admiration for his valour, as well as the censure of his madness, is quite evident. For the greater part of the poem, Maniakes, being cast as a Homeric hero, engages in man-to-man combat with unnamed soldiers of the imperial army. The close imitation of Homer in content and form leads here to a manifestly unhistorical poem.

In my interpretation, these poems anticipate a reading that predominantly pays attention to technical metrical features. Christophoros here demonstrates his mastery of metrical technique, and also his familiarity with the Homeric poems, but without engaging with them on a literary or interpretative level.<sup>64</sup> It is impossible to tell whether these poems were written by a student, or by a teacher giving an exemplary model, or perhaps by a careerist proving his intellectual skills. But I would argue that in any case their affinity with school exercises is evident. Their demonstration of formal technique had more relevance for contemporary readers than any ideological message.

## 6.2. TEACHING WITH POETRY: DIDACTIC VERSE

At the intersection between education and poetry lies one of those domains of Byzantine literature that have always baffled modern readers: didactic poetry. It may seem a strange, even an abject,<sup>65</sup> phenomenon, running counter to all our conceptions of what poetry should be. Thousands of verses long, they present dry information

<sup>63</sup> M. Brogini, 'Il carme *Εἰς τὸν Μανιάκην περὶ τοῦ μούλου* attribuito al Cristoforo Mitileneo', *Porphyra* 15 (2011), 14–34.

<sup>64</sup> Browning, 'Homer in Byzantium', does not address this kind of relationship to Homeric texts; see H. Hunger, 'On the Imitation (*ΜΙΜΗΣΙΣ*) of Antiquity in Byzantine Literature', *DOP* 23 (1969), 15–38, here 33–4 and *passim* for the strictly formal aspect of Byzantine mimesis in general and *centos* in particular.

<sup>65</sup> F. Dölger, *Die byzantinische Dichtung in der Reinsprache* (Berlin 1948), 23.



without any apparent attempt to give this material any ‘poetic’ treatment, as is the case, for example, in Hellenistic didactic poetry.

The quantity (and scope) of didactic poetry in the eleventh century is considerable. Psellos’ didactic poems deal with biblical exegesis, Christian dogmas, rhetoric, grammar, medicine, and law, as well as some other minor subjects. They are a novelty in more than one way. To begin with, they are the first didactic poems in Byzantium to seek to compile systematically all the information on a given subject.<sup>66</sup> Second, the *politikos stichos*, the new purely accentual metre of the Byzantines, finds in these poems for the first time a sustained and systematic application; and, moreover, the metre is used for the first time by an author belonging to the learned elite.

The didactic poems of Niketas of Herakleia were written in a later period.<sup>67</sup> Among them we find some lengthy poems that treat grammar in a general way, and some poems that address specific orthographical questions (for example, on words ending in *-ότατος*); there is also a poem on divine epithets, and one on names of rivers. Finally, apart from Psellos and Niketas, we have an etymological poem transmitted under the name of Ioannes Mauropous,<sup>68</sup> and it cannot be excluded that some of the didactic pseudo-Pselliana belong to our period.

The aesthetics of Byzantine didactic poetry are particularly problematic because style, diction, and vocabulary do not at all differ from prose and are sometimes even more ‘prosaic’, in our terms. In several instances, we can observe that verses have been taken over from prose texts, only slightly altered to fit the metrical mould. For example, Psellos’ poem on rhetoric is derived from the Hermogenic corpus, which gives this definition of *περιβολή*, a technical rhetorical term:

*Περιβολή δὲ ἀντάρκης προοιμίων διπλασιάσαι ὄνομα καὶ διπλασιάσαι κῶλον.*<sup>69</sup>

<sup>66</sup> W. Hörandner, ‘La poésie profane au XIe siècle et la connaissance des auteurs anciens’, *TM* 6 (1976), 245–63, here 254.

<sup>67</sup> For an overview of Niketas’ didactic poems: J. Schneider, ‘La poésie didactique à Byzance: Nicétas d’Héraclée’, *Bulletin de l’Association Guillaume Budé* 58 (1999), 388–423.

<sup>68</sup> Ioannes Mauropous, *Etymologicum Metricum*, ed. R. Reitzenstein, *M. Terentius Varro und Johannes Mauropus von Euchaita. Einer Studie zur Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft* (Leipzig 1901). See also A.R. Dyck, ‘John Mauropous of Euchaita and the “Stoic Etymologikon”’, *JÖB* 43 (1993), 113–40.

<sup>69</sup> Hermogenes, *Opera*, ed. H. Rabe (Leipzig 1913), *De inventione*, I, 5, 18–20.

In Psellos' poem, this becomes (7.112–13):

*Αὐτάρκης δὲ περιβολὴ τυγχάνει προοιμίου  
διπλασιάσαι ὄνομα, διπλασιάσαι κῶλον.*

In the first verse, Psellos inserts the verb *τυγχάνω*, an extremely common verb in his didactic poems. This word often comes in handy because it counts three syllables, providing a convenient substitute for *ἐστί*. In the second verse, Psellos is forced to omit the conjunction *καί*. The asyndeton that he thereby creates is not a stylistic 'poetic' device, but simply a way to fit Hermogenes' prose text into a fifteen-syllable mould.

This example also makes it clear that this poetry is essentially derivative. This poetry does not aim at a new treatment of the material, let alone original research. The dependency on earlier sources is spectacularly evident in poem 2 of Psellos, on the Song of Songs. Psellos' interpretation of this biblical book, as Luciano Bossina has demonstrated, is down to its smallest details dependent on Gregory of Nyssa's commentary on the Song of Songs.<sup>70</sup> This results in some remarkable oddities. Psellos' commentary only begins at v. 6 of the Song, and breaks off after 6.9, explicitly declaring that 'this is the end of the Song of Songs' (see v. 1203 and also 1152). The reason is quite simple: Psellos only had Gregory's commentary before him, which stops at 6.9. And the omission of the first verses seems to be due to the fact that some manuscripts of Gregory leave out his first homily on the Song, which covers these verses. Even biblical citations are dependent on the quotes in one particular manuscript branch of the text of Gregory's interpretation.<sup>71</sup>

Hence, these poems cannot be considered as creative works of art, still less as serious contributions to science. Any artistic ambition, at the level of diction, elaboration of material, or input of narrative, is manifestly absent. So, what is the point really of using a poetic form to transmit knowledge? Lauxtermann has posed the question of the contrast between Byzantine didactic poetry and our aesthetic

<sup>70</sup> L. Bossina, 'Psello distratto. Questioni irrisolte nei versi *In Canticum*', in: V. Panagl (ed.), *Dulce Melos. La poesia tardo antica e medievale. Atti del III Convegno internazionale di Studi, Vienna, 15–18 novembre 2004* (Alessandria 2007), 337–60.

<sup>71</sup> R. Ceulemans, 'What Can One Know about Michael Psellus' LXX Text? Examining the Psellian Canticles Quotations', *Byz 77* (2007), 42–63.

assumptions about poetry.<sup>72</sup> In recapitulating some other views on Byzantine poetry, he observes that modern readers associate the denominator ‘poetry’ with certain aesthetic qualities. Lauxtermann, conversely, holds that this poetry is to be considered poetry ‘for no other reason than that it is in verse’.<sup>73</sup> We do not need to look for an aesthetic surplus carried with the use of the verse form, other than the use of the verse form itself. The conclusion could be that the decision to use verse form is based on reasons that are directly tied to its intrinsic formal qualities, and not on associations of diction or style. In the case of the political verse, this holds true even more than for other metres: in the rare statements of the Byzantines themselves about political verse, they frequently refer to the fact that, apart from its eurhythmic qualities, it is in fact akin to prose.<sup>74</sup> Verse must have had certain innate advantages that made it a suitable medium for the transmission of knowledge. But what are these exactly?

### 6.2.1. Serious games: the charms of didactic verse

We will begin our quest with a collection of little-known poems edited by Schirò.<sup>75</sup> These texts appear to have been written by a teacher of the school of the Forty Martyrs. All but one are addressed to students of the school. The poems relate to school rivalries or are introductions to specific lessons. The fifth and final poem sheds a particular light on the connection between education and poetry. It is obviously addressed to a teacher (v. 7: a διδάσκαλος), and specifically a grammarian (v. 3: γραμματικός). This is the complete poem:

Ὡ ὑπεραγάσθην σε τῆς στιχουργίας  
καὶ τῆς ὑπὲρ νοῦν καὶ λόγον μουσουργίας  
τὸν γραμματικῶν πρόκριτον μυστηπόλων,  
ψυχὴν ἐμὴν θέλξαντα ῥυθμῶ καὶ μέτρῳ  
ὀρφαϊκῆς ἡδίων εὐήχου λύρας,

5

<sup>72</sup> M. Lauxtermann, ‘Byzantine Didactic Poetry and the Question of Poeticity’, in: P. Odorico, M. Hinterberger, and P. Agapitos (eds), «*Doux remède . . .*» *Poésie et poétique à Byzance. Actes du IVe colloque international philologique, Paris, 23–24–25 février 2006* (Paris 2009), 37–46.

<sup>73</sup> Lauxtermann, ‘Didactic Poetry’, 46.

<sup>74</sup> See Hörandner, ‘Beobachtungen zur Literarästhetik’, 285.

<sup>75</sup> G. Schirò, ‘La schedografia a bisanzio nei sec. XI–XII e la scuola dei SS. XL Martiri’, *Bolletino della badia greca di Grottaferrata* 3 (1949), 11–29.

ἦν μύθος αἰρεῖν καὶ φύσεις τῶν θηρίων·  
καὶ τίς γὰρ εἶδε τῶν τινος διδασκάλων  
οὔτω πρὸς ἦσιν τῶν μεμαθητευμένων  
ἅπαντας εἰσφέροντας ὄρμην ἐν λόγοις,  
ὡς σὲ βλέπω σπεύδοντα τέρπειν τοὺς νέους;

*Oh how do I admire you for your works in verse  
and your artistic creations, exceeding mind and reason.  
You are chosen from amongst the initiators in grammar,  
charming my soul with rhythm and metre,  
sweeter than the sonorous Orphic lyre,  
of which the story goes that it subdues even the nature of animals.  
For who ever saw anyone amongst the teachers  
thus introducing pulse into his discourse  
for the enjoyment of the pupils,  
as I see you do, in your effort to please the youths?*

The schoolmaster is here praised for his poetic works (v. 1: *στιχοουργία*). His poetry is able to charm (10: *τέρπω*) and give pleasure (8: *ἦσιν*), to his colleague as well as to the pupils. Throughout the poem, this charm is said to be brought about by the rhythmic and euphonic qualities of his poetry (see esp. v. 4, and the adjective *εὐηχος* in v. 5). Particularly attractive is the *ὄρμη* (v. 9); that is, the ‘swing’ or ‘pulse’ that our poet infused into his works. This pulse may refer to the rhythmic qualities of poetry, which, as we have seen above (46–7), made up the greatest appeal of verse for contemporary readers or listeners.

All this particularly improved his reputation as a teacher: repeatedly in this short poem, he is said to be the best of his rivals (vv. 3 and 7). It is also clear that the initiative to write in verse is taken in an effort to please his pupils (v. 10). We discern here a ‘market’ for teaching: pupils would go to the teacher who delivered his teaching in the most attractive manner. The heavy rivalry in the field of eleventh-century teaching is not alien to this: teachers had to prove their personal worth in order to uphold their renown and attract pupils, who were free to choose their teachers. The poems that precede this poem in the collection, although not didactic poetry in the strict sense, may be examples of the kind of texts praised here.

For another explicit reference to the use of verse for didactic purposes, we turn to the ‘personal dedication’ in Psellos’ poem on medicine (poem 9). This is, significantly, the only lengthy didactic poem by Psellos written in dodecasyllables rather than political verse.

The placing of this metapoetical statement is perhaps not fortuitous. The passage is to be found in the middle of the poem, and comes across as a casual remark. Psellos has just been explaining for some hundred verses the different colours and odours of urine, as well as their function in reaching a medical diagnosis. He seems to realize that this unsavoury digression has outstretched the patience of his public. He declares that he will now finish the explanation of urine, for it is not his intention to be exhaustive (9.531–7):

ἐμοὶ δὲ γνώμη καὶ σκοπὸς τῶν ἐμμέτρων  
 μὴ πάντα πάντως συλλαβεῖν τὰ τῆς τέχνης,  
 μικρὰν τεκεῖν ὄρεξιν ἀνδράσι φίλοις,  
 γραμματικοῖς, ῥήτορσι καὶ φιλοσόφοις,  
 τῆς τῶν ἰατρῶν ἀκριβεστάτης τέχνης, 535  
 ὅπως ποθοῦντες τὰς χάριτας τοῦ μέτρου  
 σὺν τῷ μέτρῳ λάβωσι καὶ τὰ τῆς τέχνης.

*For me, it is the scope and intent of these verses  
 not to gather together everything about this discipline in every way  
 but to stir up a small appetite in some esteemed men,  
 grammarians, rhetors, and philosophers,  
 (an appetite) for the most precise art of medicine, 535  
 so that they might, in their desire for the graces of metre,  
 acquire together with the metre also the subject of this discipline.*

The outward form of the poem is beautifully shaped only to ensure that the readers, by tasting the charms of its outward form, would, almost unwittingly, also absorb something of the content. The notion of *χάρις* is here emphatically associated with the use of verse. It appeals to aesthetic enjoyment, a desirable charm that was created by metre (*μέτρον*), here to be taken as ‘rhythm’.

Charm and pleasantness to the ear, graces of rhythm, and a particular ‘swing’: the dodecasyllable, with its accentual pattern, could provide these qualities up to a certain point. But another metre would be still more interesting, bringing with it also some other advantages (and problems): the *politikos stichos*, or ‘political metre’, or decapentasyllable.<sup>76</sup> In order to understand the motivations behind Psellos’ decision to write his didactic poems extensively in political verse, attention must be given to the title above poem 6 in the

<sup>76</sup> On the origins of the metre and the qualities that were in the eleventh (and other) centuries associated with it, see M. Jeffreys, ‘The Nature and Origin of the Political Verse’, *DOP* 28 (1974), 141–95.

manuscript *Paris. gr.* 1182. As we have seen, the title refers not only to this poem, but to a series of didactic poems (see above, 127–8). The text of the title is as follows:

Σύνοψις διὰ στίχων σαφῶν καὶ πολιτικῶν περὶ πασῶν τῶν ἐπιστημῶν  
γενομένη πρὸς τὸν εὐσεβέστατον βασιλέα κύριον Μιχαὴλ τὸν Δούκαν ἐκ  
προστάξεως τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ βασιλέως, ὥστε διὰ τῆς εὐκολίας καὶ  
ἡδύτητος ἐνεχθῆναι τοῦτον εἰς τὴν μάθησιν τῶν ἐπιστημῶν

*Synopsis written in clear political verses about all sciences, made for the  
most reverend emperor Michael Doukas, at the behest of his father the  
emperor, in order to introduce him, through their ease and pleasantness,  
to the study of the sciences*

We will leave aside for now the background to the imperial dedication, and concentrate on the qualities associated with the *politikos stichos*. To begin with, *politikos* is named in one breath with ‘clear’. Equally important are ‘ease’ and ‘pleasantness’. It appears that the *politikos stichos* was attractive: it pleased the ear, without being complicated.

The epilogue to poem 7 (the poem on rhetoric) sums up all the qualities which make this poem especially attractive (7.543–5):

γλυκύτητος ἀνάμεστον, χάριτος πεπλησμένον,  
ἡδυεπές, ἡδύφθογον, ἡδυμελές ἐκτόπως,  
ὡς ἂν καὶ παίζων λογικῶς κερδαίνῃς τι τοῦ λόγου.

*Full of sweetness and filled with grace,  
with attractive words and style, and extraordinarily melodious,  
so that you, in this intellectual game, might gain something from this poem.*

The general argument is the same as in poem 9: the reader will, thanks to the grace of the metre, be so engrossed by the poem that he will, almost unwittingly, gain some knowledge from it. And the main qualities connected here with this grace are qualities of style and melodiousness.

Sweetness, melodiousness, and, as an overarching term, grace (*χάρις*) are the key notions used to positively describe these poems. This brings the reader back to the age-old dictum of didactic poetry that it should combine *delectare* with *prodesse*.<sup>77</sup> ‘Sweetness’ in

<sup>77</sup> W. Hörandner, ‘The Byzantine Didactic Poem—A Neglected Literary Genre? A Survey with Special Reference to the Eleventh Century’, in: F. Bernard and K. Demoen (eds), *Poetry and its Contexts in Eleventh-century Byzantium* (Farnham/Burlington 2012), 55–67, at 55–6.

particular, in rhetorical discourse, is a quality connected with attractive, ‘easy-sounding’ form. *Charis*, in turn, is a word that Psellos uses also in other contexts. *Charis* is a complex notion in Psellian discourse.<sup>78</sup> It is often connected with the charming quality of ‘melodious’ and ‘polished’, for example in an apologetic pamphlet: ‘I approach the sciences and at the same time I express their forms, and the charm (*χάρις*) that runs ahead of these forms makes the carving of this creation melodious and polished.’<sup>79</sup> Most interestingly, it often turns up in Psellos’ statements about his educational project, if we may so call it, to make *φιλοσοφία* more accessible by garbing it in *ρήτορική*.<sup>80</sup> As to the term *ρήτορική*, we have already remarked that this could encompass poetry as well.<sup>81</sup> Hence, it is conceivable that Psellos, when he referred to his project of uniting philosophy with rhetoric, may have at least indirectly or partly been thinking of his own didactic poems. In many cases, Psellos makes it clear that in his teaching practice he mediates knowledge by couching it in attractive forms. In a funeral oration for one of his students, he says that, in his teaching, he ‘atticized the philosophic notions with eurythmic and technical words, thereby uplifting the profoundness of philosophy’.<sup>82</sup> The fact that rhythm is mentioned here again as an element that could make science more attractive and accessible may be an indication that the rhythmical, or generally euphonic, aspects of poetry were an important motivation for using a poetic form to transmit knowledge. Political verse would for this, of course, come even more into the picture.

The epilogue to poem 7, quoted above, contains yet another remarkable feature: that of *παίζων λογικῶς*, an almost untranslatable conceit that refers to ‘serious play’, or ‘intellectual games’. It is perhaps no accident that the specific element of ‘playfulness’ turns up in a poem in political verse. As Jeffreys has demonstrated,

<sup>78</sup> S. Papaioannou, *Michael Psellos: Rhetoric and Authorship in Byzantium* (Cambridge/New York 2013), 131–65 and *passim*.

<sup>79</sup> Psellos, *Or. min.* 7.129: ὁμοῦ τε πρόσειμι ταῖς ἐπιστήμαις καὶ ἐναποτυπῶμαι τὰ τούτων εἶδη καὶ ἢ τοῦ εἶδους προδραμοῦσα χάρις ἐμμελῆ τε καὶ εὐπερίστροφον τὴν τῆς πλάσεως τορεῖαν εἰργάσατο.

<sup>80</sup> E.g. Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VI, §41.

<sup>81</sup> See above, 41.

<sup>82</sup> Michael Psellos, *Scripta Minora*, ed. E. Kurtz and F. Drexel (Milan 1936), I, 212, l. 25–7: τὰς φιλοσόφους ἐνοιῶς ἠττίκιζον λέξεσιν εὐρύθμοις καὶ τεχνικοῖς ἐπαίρων τὸ τῆς φιλοσοφίας βαθύ.

playfulness is an important quality associated with political verse.<sup>83</sup> The educational task of the teacher in Byzantium encompassed an element of entertainment.

The connection between playfulness and the political verse is demonstrated most clearly in a poem of Niketas of Herakleia, which sets out to explain subjunctive verbs. Niketas opens his poem, addressed to his pupils, in this way:

Φέρε μικρόν τι παίξωμεν πολιτικοῖς ἐν στίχοις  
τῆς νόσου παρηγόρημα καὶ τῆς μικροψυχίας,  
περὶ ῥημάτων δ' ἔστωσαν αὐθυποτάκτων οὐτοῦ  
τοῦτο γὰρ ἀνεξέταστον ἐστὶ τὸ μέρος μόνον.<sup>84</sup>

*Come, let us amuse ourselves a little in political verses,  
a consolation in sickness and faint-heartedness.  
Let these be about subjunctive verbs,  
for this is the only topic which we have not examined.*<sup>85</sup>

Niketas proposes to his students a playful lesson, in an equivalent to Psellos' παίξων λογικῶς. Here, political verse must be seen as a direct cause of this playfulness.

The association between poetry and play recurs often in Niketas' poems. In the poem on grammar addressed to a 'noble child', he says that this poem is itself a means to give this lofty (σεμνόν) material a 'playful appearance'.<sup>86</sup> In this case too, the use of political verse could be the main reason for calling this poem a playful game.

The title above Psellos 6 also advertised clarity and simplicity as commendable features of political verse. These are of course of particular interest to didactic poetry.<sup>87</sup> The most outright claim to this feature we find in poem 2, on the Song of Songs, where the

<sup>83</sup> Jeffreys, 'Nature and Origins', 174–5 and elsewhere.

<sup>84</sup> Niketas of Herakleia, *De verbis subjunctivis*, ed. S. Lambros, *Ἰωάννου τοῦ Τζέτζου Περὶ ῥημάτων αὐθυποτάκτων στίχοι πολιτικοί*, *NE* 16.2 (1922), 191–7, vv. 1–3. The attribution to Niketas is disputed in J. Schneider, 'La poésie didactique à Byzance: Nicétas d'Héraclée', *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé* 58 (1999), 388–423, here at 397.

<sup>85</sup> Translation from: Jeffreys, 'Nature and Origins', 166.

<sup>86</sup> Niketas of Herakleia, *De re grammatica* (inc. *Πρὸς παῖδα σεμνόν*), ed. J.-Fr. Boissonade, *Anecdota Graeca*, vol. II (Paris 1830), p. 340, vv. 1–8. On the identity of this 'noble child', see A. Tovar, 'Nicetas of Heraclea and Byzantine Grammatical Doctrine', in: *Classical Studies Dedicated to E. B. Perry* (Urbana 1969), 223–35, esp. 233–4.

<sup>87</sup> For the aspect of clarity in Psellos' didactic poems in political verse, see Jeffreys, 'Nature and Origins', 164.



exegesis is said to be written ‘in the most simple and common words’: *ἐν ἀπλουστάταις λέξεσι καὶ κατημαξευμέναις* (2.7). The word *κατημαξευμέναις* denotes a familiar level of language, a style that is somehow ‘lower’ in comparison to other literary styles, and hence likely refers to political verse. In the epilogue to poem 1, Psellos states: ‘I have explained everything in a concise and clear poem’ (1.299: *συντόμῳ πάντα καὶ σαφεῖ ἐξηγησάμην λόγῳ*). It appears here that political verse in particular was perceived as implying a more simple and more accessible form of language. Poem 9, on medicine, the only lengthy didactic poem not written in political verse, may serve as a contrast, for it does not mention this feature of clarity explicitly. The quality of ‘clarity’ is, moreover, related to another important quality, which I will call here ‘synoptic’.<sup>88</sup>

### 6.2.2. The synoptic quality of poetry

When referring to his own poems, Psellos makes repeated use of the word-field around *συνοράω*: literally, ‘seeing together’. The title in the manuscript of the series of poems that Psellos offered to Michael VII Doukas is *Σύνοψις περὶ πασῶν τῶν ἐπιστημῶν*. Poem 8 (over 1,000 verses long) is likewise called *Σύνοψις τῶν νόμων*. Poem 7 also refers twice to itself as a *σύνοψις* (7.287, 541), and to underscore this, Psellos calls it ‘a lesson clearly laid out, concise and well divided’ (7.542: *εὐσύνοπτόν τι μάθημα, σύντομον, τετμημένον*). Poem 3 is called a basis (*θεμέλιον*), which is ‘concise, synoptic, and well delineated’ (3.2: *σύντομον καὶ συνοπτικὸν καὶ περιγεγραμμένον*). Repeatedly, Psellos announces that he ‘summarizes’ (*συνοφίζω*) something: *συνοφίσας* (1.292), *συνοφίσομεν* (7.517), *συνοφίσας* (8.6), *συνοφίζειν* (8.206). In poem 8, Psellos claims to have addressed all branches of law (8.1408: *πάντων δ’ ἠψάμην τῶν μερῶν νομίμων*) but all the same the information is contained in an ‘extremely synoptical’ book (8.1409: *συνοπτικώτατον βιβλίον*), which is easy to grasp and readily understandable (8.1410: *ἔτοιμον εἰς κατάληψιν καὶ πρόχειρον εἰς γνῶσιν*). This synoptic quality is connected with the pledge that these poems are ‘concise’ (*σύντομος*: 1.299, 3.2, 5.78, 7.542, 9.1) and short (*βραχύ*: 7.290). Adjectives such as ‘well delineated’ (3.2: *περιγεγραμμένον*) and

<sup>88</sup> I encountered some problems in expressing in English the concept that would be called ‘übersichtlich’ in German (‘overzichtelijk’ in Dutch).

'well divided' (7.542: *τετμημένον*) are also revealing: they suggest that the information comes in small condensed parts, clearly separated from each other.

It is clear that the 'synoptic' quality is put forward by Psellos as the most remarkable achievement of his poems. Verse sets boundaries to the flow of language that may otherwise be unrestrained, chaotic, and unbalanced. The specific characteristics of Byzantine verse are of great importance here. Byzantine verse avoids enjambments: it never continues a syntactical unit over two lines by means of an enjambment, and it completes just one thought within one verse or half verse. Moreover, it is isosyllabic: each verse counts the same number of syllables, and each verse itself is divided into shorter half verses or *kola* separated by a clear pause. These characteristics ensure that the information contained in a didactic poem comes in small, equal fragments. Byzantine poetry, as has by now been firmly established, strives after the rhetorical quality of eurhythmic and concise diction,<sup>89</sup> and Byzantines were aware that the colon structure of their accentual poetry corresponded to the colon structure of prose.<sup>90</sup> Verse is capable of summarizing ideas in short syntactical units that follow a repeating rhythmical pattern, and it was this quality that greatly enhanced the perspicuity of didactic poetry.

This synoptic feature becomes all the more remarkable when we observe that it is far less present in scientific works in prose. There is only one instance where a word from the lexical group *συνοράω* refers to a prose work of Psellos: a didactic work on Aristotle's *Περὶ ἑρμηνείας*.<sup>91</sup> The second part of this work bears the title *σύνοψις καὶ μετὰφρασις σαφειστάτη τῆς διδασκαλίας τοῦ Περὶ ἑρμηνείας*; that is, a *synopsis* and a 'rewriting' of Psellos' own lectures on Aristotle's *Peri hermeneias*. If we look at this small synopsis, we see that it is interspersed by headings indicating the different subjects. The work is thus visually divided into small paragraphs, each one preceded by a short

<sup>89</sup> See Hörandner, 'Beobachtungen zur Literarästhetik', 288–9, and Lauxtermann, 'Velocity', 20–1, both in reference to the dodecasyllable.

<sup>90</sup> M. Lauxtermann, *The Spring of Rhythm. An Essay on the Political Verse and Other Byzantine Metres* (Vienna 1999), 83.

<sup>91</sup> Psellos, *Philosophica Minora*, vol. I, 52. Psellos' authorship is not certain, cf. Psellos, *Phil. Min.* I, p. xxxvi. Psellos, *Phil. Min.* I 50, also called a *σύνοψις*, is certainly spurious; interestingly, it displays the same visual features described in reference to opusc. 52.

title. Undoubtedly, this outlook permitted the use of the word *σύνοψις* in its title.

This example, isolated as it is, suggests that there might be a visual aspect involved that determines the ‘synoptic’ quality of didactic poems. Verse is necessarily laid out on the page vertically. In a didactic poem, each verse expands on one specific problem (in Psellos’ poems, often a difficult term); mostly the word that is explained is put at the beginning of the verse. Applied to the kind of line-by-line explanation that Psellos maintains, the poems appear as lists of different ‘entries’. Each entry is of equal length, and the vertical ordering permits easy scrolling and an easy overview of the different parts. The adjective *εὐθήρατος* (8.7) may be considered literally: it is easy to ‘catch’ the answer you are looking for. It assists readers with knowledge at a glance. In contrast to a dense prose text with seemingly no divisions, poetry enables a clear entry-by-entry overview of its subject. Consequently, when we assume that the poetic form is used *qua* poetic form for these didactic texts, its basic feature of arranging a text in a vertical way would be an important visual factor especially useful for texts transmitting knowledge.

Added to this are the obvious acoustical advantages of verse. There is one passage in a poem of Niketas of Herakleia where Niketas seems to imply that his student is actually mimicking his teacher who ‘sings’ his lesson.<sup>92</sup> Perhaps we have to imagine here a lively classroom setting where the students repeat their teacher, who declaims short sentences, each of them of equal length and regulated by a fixed accentual pattern. A mnemotechnic function may also have played a role. Could the *charis* of poetry then consist in the almost hypnotic potential of hundreds of consecutive verses, mutually declaimed, eurhythmically transporting the pupils into a world of knowledge?

### 6.2.3. A classroom setting

Here we have arrived at the possibility that these poems might be used in a classroom context; that is, in concrete teaching practice. As Hörandner has observed, many of Psellos’ didactic poems reflect a classroom situation, in which the first-person narrator takes on the

<sup>92</sup> Niketas of Herakleia, *De re grammatica* (inc. *Πρὸς παῖδα σεμνόν*), v. 437: *ἀντᾶδεις μοι προσάδοντι*.

role of the teacher, and a second-person addressee takes up the role of pupil.<sup>93</sup> They follow in this respect the custom of classical didactic poetry. This feature is present in almost all of Psellos' poems in political verse, hence also all poems addressed to emperors. It is also very emphatically present in Niketas' poems, which may very well be a residue of real oral recitation.

By contrast, the 'etymologicon', ascribed to Mauropus, does not assume a teaching persona, but a writing persona. At the end of the poem (vv. 471–2), the poet declares that he had to break off his work (*ponos*), because he was interrupted by other *ponoi*, probably referring to physical troubles:<sup>94</sup>

Ἄλλοι με πικροὶ συνταράξαντες πόνοι  
ἔπαυσαν ἄφνω τὸν γλυκὴν τοῦτον πόνον.

*Other bitter pains that trouble me  
Have made me to put a sudden end to this sweet effort.*

Here, there can be little doubt: the I-person speaking from within the poem (the speech situation) is a poet sitting at his desk, laboriously writing his works.

The case of Psellos is different, and especially interesting because it is also instructive concerning the question of interaction between patronage and poetic form. The first-person narrator in Psellos' didactic poems is an all-knowing teaching persona, who is in firm control of the way his lesson unfolds. The second person is also consistent. Throughout the poems, a student is addressed, who is in all poems (that is, in the text themselves, not only in the titles) identified as an emperor: *δέσποτα* (5.1), *ἄναξ* (7.80), *στεφηνφόρε* (8.1407), etc. The poem on rhetoric, most notably, is introduced with the claim that the subject is particularly useful for emperors (7.1–3).

Moreover, the poems are presented as being recited in a context in which the poet teaches the imperial pupil in person. The poem on the Song of Songs in particular reads like a direct rendering of an oral lecture or lesson, attended by only the emperor. Psellos introduces the poem as the response to a specific command of the emperor (1–7; cf. also *infra*). The biblical verses that are to be commented on are

<sup>93</sup> Hörandner, 'Byzantine Didactic Poem', 67.

<sup>94</sup> Reitzenstein, *Varro und Mauropus*, 18, thinks that the poet refers to other works, but this does not fit so well with the adjective *πικροί*.

frequently preceded by remarks that hint at an oral context. For instance: ‘But let us listen to the continuation of the Song: for the bride says to the groom: (etc.).’<sup>95</sup> As we have seen, references to ‘listening’ abound in this poem; and it is represented as if teacher and pupil together listen to the words the bride and the groom say in the Song.<sup>96</sup> In another case, Psellos reassures his pupil that he should not be too surprised by the explanations, for prophecies can be illogical at times (723–6). Sometimes, he also explicitly summons the emperor to be attentive: ‘You, pay attention carefully to the exegesis of these verses!’<sup>97</sup> In these examples, Psellos anticipates the reaction of his audience in his poem, creating the impression of a dialogue in progress between pupil and teacher. This is the ploy of ‘poetic simultaneity’ used often in didactic poetry: the poem conveys the impression that the lesson progresses as the poem progresses.<sup>98</sup> This helps to underpin the personal teacher–student framework: the poet takes on the role of teacher, while the addressee is identified as a pupil listening closely to the lesson, and even reacting to it.

At one point, Psellos promises to deal with a particular problem later: it is something ‘about which you will be instructed more extensively further on’.<sup>99</sup> The adverb *κάτωθεν* here is intriguing: it is difficult to maintain that this adverb could be used in a purely oral context referring to a moment later in time. Rather, it has the spatial sense of ‘below’, thus assuming a written text. It has a perfect counterpart in v. 1150, where *ἄνωθεν* is used to refer to an exegesis that was given by Psellos ‘earlier’ in the text. Other features in the didactic poems seem to combine oral recitation with the idea that the poem was offered in written form. In poem 7 (287–90), Psellos interrupts his explanation to attract attention to the syllabus that the emperor is holding, most likely a scroll,<sup>100</sup> encouraging him to ask further questions if something is not clear. Poem 1 is offered in the form of a gift (v. 293). These examples may confirm that the setting of an oral lesson need not be taken at face value.

<sup>95</sup> Psellos 2.299–300: Ἀλλ’ ἀκουσώμεθα λοιπὸν καὶ τῶν ἐξῆς ἀσμάτων·// φησὶ γὰρ ἔτι πρὸς αὐτὸν ἡ νύμφη τὸν νυμφίον.

<sup>96</sup> See above, 104.

<sup>97</sup> Psellos 2.707: Σὺ δέ μοι σφόδρα πρόσεχε τῇ τούτων ἐξηγήσει.

<sup>98</sup> K. Volk, *The Poetics of Latin Didactic. Lucretius, Vergil, Ovid, Manilius* (Oxford 2002), 13–24. See also Hörandner, ‘Byzantine Didactic Poem’, 56.

<sup>99</sup> Psellos 2.284: ἦν μάλιστα πλατύτερον κάτωθεν διδαχθήση.

<sup>100</sup> See above, 92–3.

The smaller didactic poems too are constructed in such a way as to give the impression of a teacher–student situation. There is often an address to a second-person singular (10.1: βέλτιστε; 13.3 εὔροισ). The poem on the iambic trimeter (poem 14) is written in the imperative or in the future second singular throughout. Poem 12 is the only short didactic poem addressed to an emperor, in this case Michael Doukas. Psellos here points out that marriage to a daughter of a grand-nephew is forbidden. He reinforces the personal address with an interjection ἴσθι (v. 4). Poem 15, prescribing a diet, contains imperatives (v. 3. λάβε). It is clear that the didactic poems of Psellos respond to the need for ‘poetic simultaneity’ required of didactic poems. Their intradiscursive setting<sup>101</sup> is that of a classroom, in which the poet as a teacher instructs a pupil, mostly an emperor. Other features, however, suggest also a written dimension to the didactic message.

### 6.3. PUBLIC AND DEDICATEES OF DIDACTIC POETRY

#### 6.3.1. Political verse: an ambiguous metre

The aspect of the classroom setting brings us to an important dimension of political verse that we have left aside until now: its connection with patronage and the tastes of the dedicatees. There can be no doubt that the imperial identity of the dedicatees is an important factor in Psellos’ decision to use the *politikos stichos*. The court was, as Michael Jeffreys has demonstrated, one of the cultural poles around which the use of political verse revolved.<sup>102</sup> While political verse is unlikely to have originated at the imperial court, in the tenth century it appears to have become, together with related forms, a fashionable metre in this milieu.<sup>103</sup> In this respect, it is arguably no coincidence that, of all Psellos’ major didactic poems, the only one written in dodecasyllables, poem 9 on medicine, is also the only poem *not* dedicated to an emperor but to Psellos’ learned friends.

<sup>101</sup> For the term see above, 112–14.

<sup>102</sup> Jeffreys, ‘Nature and Origins’, 180.

<sup>103</sup> See W. Hörandner, ‘Court Poetry: Questions of Motifs, Structure and Function’, in: E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Rhetoric in Byzantium* (Aldershot 2003), 75–85, here at 76–7.

However, the metre's popularity with the highest social circles does not correspond in a proportional way to its intellectual value as perceived by contemporaries. As Jeffreys has shown, political verse enjoyed (or suffered from) a peculiar status: it was frowned upon by *hoi logioi*, who went so far as to call it ἄμετρος: in fact, it could not even be called a 'metre'. Mauropous, very probably in reference to the political verse, states: 'an unprosodic (ἄμετρος) metre is to my mind no metre at all' (34.5).<sup>104</sup>

Nevertheless, the *politikos stichos* was becoming increasingly popular, spreading to more different genres than before.<sup>105</sup> Authors less sensible to intellectual pressures, such as Symeon the New Theologian, felt no qualms about using this metre and other unprosodic metres. It is curious, but not illogical, that Niketas Stethatos also labels the metrical choices of his great hero as ἀμέτρῳ μέτρῳ, perfectly echoing Mauropous' term.<sup>106</sup>

Related to the low status of the metre (from an intellectual perspective) is the practice of making superficial summaries and dedicating them to emperors. There is one remarkable passage in Psellos' own works with which we have to come to terms, for he seems here to take issue with this practice. It is to be found in Psellos' funeral oration for Xiphilinos, when treating his friend's occupation with rhetoric:

*Thus, in contrast to what most orators thought necessary, he did not divide rhetoric into different parts, nor did he compress its infinite power by turning it into something like a synoptic work, in similar fashion to those who separate the sea from the great waters; instead, he discovered all its effects and principles, and adopted these in his work, not by making a synopsis of its wealth for common people or lazy and indolent emperors, but by demonstrating its whole amplitude.*<sup>107</sup>

<sup>104</sup> For a discussion of this passage, see below, 272–3.

<sup>105</sup> For this extension of use, cf. Lauxtermann, *Spring of Rhythm*, 39.

<sup>106</sup> Niketas Stethatos, *Vie de Syméon le Nouveau Théologien (949–1022)*, ed. P. H. I. Hausherr (Rome 1928), § 37, l. 12; see also Jeffreys, 'Nature and Origins', 166.

<sup>107</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiphil.*, p. 455, l. 7–14: οὐ γὰρ οὕτως τὴν ῥητορικὴν διήρει ὥσπερ οἱ πλείους τῶν ῥητόρων ᾤθησαν δεῖν, οὐδὲ τὴν ἄπειρον ταύτης δύναμιν, ὥσπερ συνοπτικὸν ποιούμενος λόγον συνέστειλε, καθάπερ οἱ τὴν θάλασσαν ἀπὸ τῶν μεγάλων πελαγῶν διαιροῦντες, ἀλλὰ πάσας αὐτῆς τὰς δυνάμεις καὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς ἐφεύρε καὶ συνεισήγεκεν οὐκ ἰδιώταις τισίν, ἢ βασιλεύσιν ἀργοῖς καὶ ῥαθύμοις σύνοισιν τοῦ πλήθους ποιούμενος, ἀλλὰ τὴν ὅλην αὐτῆς ὑπαρξίαν τῷ λόγῳ παραδεικνύς.

Xiphilinos is praised because he did not do what Psellos obviously has done: writing vulgarizing scientific summaries for people who do not have the intellectual capacity or preparedness to go through the whole discipline of rhetoric. The word *synopsis*, so important for didactic poems, occurs twice in this passage, and is here decidedly a negative term. Writing such *synopseis* for emperors is clearly considered here as inappropriate for a true intellectual. It is a sign of base motivations.

Interestingly, the common people (*idiotès* in Psellos' terms)—that is, those who have not enjoyed a suitable education—are set on a par with emperors, who could have enjoyed education, but did not have the zeal to immerse themselves in *hoi logoi*. The passage indicates that 'popular' taste was something that the court shared with more common people. This should not surprise us: even in Psellos' own account, his pupil Michael Doukas was at best an average pupil, missing the finer details of writing poetry;<sup>108</sup> about other emperors, such as Romanos III Argyros, he is even more disparaging.<sup>109</sup> No doubt, the *politikos stichos* formed part of this popular taste, and the condescending tone of Psellos towards *synopseis* for the *idiotès* or for lazy emperors also targets this metre.

There is a remarkable contradiction here, by no means unique in Psellos, between theory and practice. As emerges from this passage, Psellos' didactic poems surely did not sit well with the high standards that *hoi logioi* set for themselves. Perhaps we can begin to understand Psellos' remarkable reticence about his poetic activities. They deviated from the ideal of intellectual integrity and were likely to attract accusations that he used improper sophistic tricks to realize base ambitions. As such, the use of the political verse was an uneasy exercise between catering to popular tastes and upholding intellectual ethics. But the advantages to be gained from offering poems to emperors were considerable.

### 6.3.2. Imperial tastes

One of the self-representations put forward by Psellos is that of imperial preceptor. He fancied himself in the role of Aristotle

<sup>108</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VIIc, § 4; see also above, 36–7.

<sup>109</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book III, § 2.



teaching Alexander the Great, or Plato advising the Sicilian tyrants.<sup>110</sup> This self-fashioning is also eminently present in the funeral oration for Xiphilinos, in which Psellos relates at length his teaching activities and those of his friend. At a particular point, Psellos says, Monomachos became infatuated with the idea of becoming a learned emperor. He recalled Psellos to the palace and made him his personal teacher, noting down what he dictated to him, in imitation of Marcus Aurelius, the philosopher emperor. This was considered by Psellos the climax of his teaching career. It ‘produced a marvel for him, for me a glory that was unbelievable to most men’.<sup>111</sup> It was something unheard of, like the novel function of consul of philosophers: a prestigious status that was likely to produce protest and jealousy from rival intellectuals.

His tutorship of the crown prince Michael VII Doukas, some decades later, is likewise described as an extremely prestigious and exceptional function. Psellos himself acknowledges this, when he describes in his *Chronographia* how Michael chose him as his teacher, giving him priority over all other teachers. By doing this, he ‘made his [Psellos’] name known to everyone’.<sup>112</sup> The imperial dedications of the poems and the personal addresses to imperial pupils are signs of his personal status and his beloved role of ‘philosopher of kings’.

Given this situation, it was only natural that Psellos complied to the tastes of his powerful patrons. But he finds a way to partly deflect the accusations of low reputation that the metre enjoyed from an intellectual standpoint. The poems give enough indications that the choice of the *politikos stichos* was not Psellos’ own, but that of his patrons. As we have already noted, the title above the series of didactic poems (in the modern edition, the title above poem 6) implies that the poems were written as an outcome of a precise and explicit order of Konstantinos Doukas. The title in the important manuscript *Paris. gr. 1182* mentions a *πρόσταξις* (command), while *Laur. 57.26* mentions a *προστασία* (charge). The same applies to poem 8: in the title to this poem, reference is also made to a *πρόσταξις* of Konstantinos X Doukas.

<sup>110</sup> Psellos, *Ep. K-D 231*, addressed to *caesar* Doukas.

<sup>111</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.*, p. 434, l. 18–19: ἐκείνω τε θαῦμα διδόν, κάμοι σεμνότητα τοῖς πολλοῖς ἄπιστον.

<sup>112</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VIIc, §4, l. 21–2: πολλάκις τὸν συγγραφέα ὑπερεβάλλετο, ὃν δὴ καὶ καθηγητὴν πρὸ πάντων εἶλετο καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν ἐδημοσίευσεν τὸ ὄνομα.

Poem 2, the exegesis of the Song of Songs, also insists on the fact that it was made to order. This poem is addressed to three different emperors: most titles in the manuscripts refer to Monomachos, but others mention Michael VII, and even Nikephoros Botaneiates. The poem states from the beginning that the motivation behind the composition of this poem was the eagerness of the emperor to learn something about the exegesis of the Song of Songs (l. 3). Psellos says that he has obeyed his command (v. 4: *θέσπισμα*) and will give the explanation in ‘simple and familiar wordings’ (v. 7; see above). This last description is explicit about the somewhat inferior intellectual status of the political verse. I would suggest that Psellos adds this to emphasize that the choice of metre and style was part of the imperial ‘command’.

The end of the poem clearly establishes the connection between the metre of the poem and the imperial request (vv. 1215–18):

*Ἡμεῖς μὲν οὖν τοῦπίταγμα τὸ σόν, ὦ στεφηφόρε,  
ἀποπληρώσαι θέλοντες ὡς δούλοι τοῦ σοῦ κράτους,  
ὡς δυνατὸν ἐγράψαμεν πολιτικοῖς ἐν στίχοις  
τὴν τῶν Ἀισμάτων δύναμιν, ἐξήγησιν καὶ γνῶσιν.*

*So, wishing to fulfil your command, O Lord,  
as slaves of your power,  
I have, for the best I could, written down in political verse  
the meaning, exegesis and knowledge of the Song of Songs.*

This is the only instance where Psellos mentions the term ‘*politikos stichos*’. It is presented as the direct outcome of the imperial order. He insists on the fact that the poem was executed at imperial command (mentioned three times; v. 4: *θεσπίσματι*, vv. 1201 and 1215: *ἐπίταγμα*): Psellos wants to ensure that his public understands that he has not degraded himself to this metre at his own initiative. It was part of a personal directive of the emperor. The impression is created that the ‘ease’ and ‘pleasantness’, features connected with political verse, are qualities explicitly requested by the imperial commissioner of the poems.

This repeated emphasis on the commissioned status of these poems stands in sharp contrast to the motivation that is said to underlie poem 9, the poem on medicine in dodecasyllables. In the *sphragis* at verses 529–38, Psellos presents this poem as a spontaneous gesture to satisfy the curiosity of (unnamed) friends. He wants to ‘impart a little appetite’ (v. 533: *μικρὰν τεκεῖν ὄρεξιν*), no more.

The graces of metre are here intended to meet the refined tastes of men on the same intellectual level as Psellos himself.

### 6.3.3. Recycling poems

The question of the imperial dedications gets a little more complicated when we have a look at the manuscripts. It is well known that the titles of the didactic poems disagree in the manuscripts as to which emperor the poems are dedicated to. No doubt, as Westerink noted in his introductions to the poems, these different dedications go back to adjustments carried out by Psellos himself. In other words, when a new emperor ascended the throne, Psellos took the same text out of his drawer and simply changed the dedication to offer it to the new prince. Thus, poem 1 was first offered to Konstantinos IX Monomachos, then to Michael Doukas. Poem 2 is offered to Nikephoros Botaneiates as well as to the two emperors just mentioned. Poems 3, 4, and 6 belong to the series offered to Michael Doukas, but seem to have been dedicated to Monomachos as well. It is only in the titles to poems 5, 7, and 8 that no mention of Monomachos is to be found.

Normally only the dedications in the titles of the poems are changed. Poem 6 on grammar, conversely, seems to have undergone more fundamental changes in its text as it was dedicated to different emperors (Konstantinos Monomachos and Michael Doukas). The poem consists of two parts: a compilation of the *Ars* of Dionysius Thrax, and a lexicon. The first section of this lexicon, as Westerink showed, is drawn together from a source in its turn based on the *Souda* and other etymologies, whereas the second section (containing a list of various medical terms) derives from a source that Psellos also used for other works. The manuscripts show a very heterogeneous picture. *Paris. gr.* 1182 (P), the standard Psellian manuscript, has the longest text, and contains a dedication to Michael Doukas. So does *Laur.* 57.26 (p<sup>P</sup>), but it omits many verses towards the end of the manuscript. Another manuscript, *Patm.* 110 (p<sup>9</sup>) displays more or less the same text, also omitting some verses at the end, but contains a dedication to Monomachos. But most manuscripts (dubbed by Westerink the ‘vulgata’) have a very different verse order: all items of the lexicon are put in alphabetical order, and many verses are omitted. All these manuscripts contain a dedication to Konstantinos

Monomachos. A peculiar manuscript is *Alexandrinus Patr.* 181 (p<sup>r</sup>), which has the same order as the ‘vulgar’ version, but agrees with P, p<sup>p</sup>, and p<sup>q</sup> in its textual variants; it has also a dedication to Monomachos.

Westerink reconstructed the text history as follows:<sup>113</sup> Psellos first made a version of the poem that was the most complete and logical. Then he ordered a scribe to make a new version: this scribe tried to alphabetize the poem, but thereby ruined the text. This version was offered to Monomachos. When Psellos later decided to offer it to Michael Doukas, he returned to his earlier, correct, version.

In this reconstruction, not only does it remain unclear why Psellos should have offered an inferior version to Monomachos and an older and better one to Doukas, but it also fails to explain the peculiar situation in the manuscript p<sup>q</sup>, with the ‘good’ text but the Monomachos dedication, and the hybrid text in p<sup>r</sup>. It is more probable that Psellos used the same text twice to offer to the emperor, and that changes to the text were made later. In this scenario, the oldest version dedicated to Monomachos survives in only one manuscript, p<sup>q</sup>. The other version for Doukas is preserved in the branch represented by P and p<sup>p</sup>. The scribes of two of these three manuscripts (p<sup>q</sup> and p<sup>p</sup>) did not take the trouble to copy each lexical item meticulously, but omitted several of them. The fact that the omissions vary from manuscript to manuscript suggests that this was on the initiative of each individual scribe, and does not go back to intentions of Psellos or his close entourage.

The text underwent a phase in which attempts were made to arrange each lexical entry alphabetically. Psellos himself did not intend to produce an ‘alphabetical’ poem. The apparent alphabetical order is entirely due to his close reliance on his sources. At certain points, one can observe that the original order imposed by Psellos on his material is by no means systematically alphabetical. The following passage is a case in point. At v. 340, between entries beginning with an ε, we find suddenly an explanation of the word ξυρόν (‘razorblade’ which, it is said, can also mean ‘danger’). This sudden jump in the alphabet can be easily explained if we see that all relevant sources (Souda, Hesychius, etc.) do not have the entry ‘ξυρόν’ but the expression ‘ἐπὶ ξυροῦ’, which means ‘in danger’, and which is duly placed between the words

<sup>113</sup> Westerink, *Poemata*, 60.

beginning with  $\epsilon$ .<sup>114</sup> Psellos merely took over the word in the place in which he found it in his source.

A first attempt to ‘alphabetize’ the poem was made with few departures from the text itself; this resulted in p<sup>r</sup>. The model of another branch had a text that was apparently not so well preserved: this resulted in the vulgata version. Both versions, by accident I would argue, relied on a manuscript that had an ascription to Monomachos. Whether these redrafts were executed at the behest of Psellos cannot be ascertained; it is likely that this happened later. But they were obviously done with the aim of making the poems easier to consult. In sum: the history of the textual composition of this poem cannot be connected to actions of Psellos alone to please his patron.

Poem 1, on the inscriptions of the psalms, also has an intricate text history. It bears a dedication to Monomachos in the titles of some manuscripts, and to Michael Doukas in others. The emperor is also—as in most other didactic poems—repeatedly addressed in the text itself, with interjections such as *δέσποτά μου* or *ἄναξ*. But there is also a group of manuscripts that omits all references to emperors, both in the titles and in the text.<sup>115</sup> Whenever the poem includes an address to the emperor (for example, v. 1: *δέσποτά μου*), this group of manuscripts substitutes a general address, apparently to a group of students (in this example: *φιλόλογοι*). Moreover, these manuscripts omit the last section of the text (from l. 292 to the end). Significantly, this section is an epilogue to the main text, where the poet addresses the emperor and dedicates the poem as a gift.

It might be interesting to note that the group of manuscripts that omits any mention of an emperor agree in their deviant readings with the oldest extant textual witness. This oldest witness is the *Bodl. Clarke* 15, which was written in 1078, while Psellos was probably still alive.<sup>116</sup> This fragment also ends just before the final dedicatory verses. The evidence from *Bodl. Clarke* 15 may confirm that the manuscripts that do not include a dedication reflect a contemporary version of Psellos’ poem, a version of a poem not offered to emperors. In any event, these manuscripts indicate that a contemporary teacher

<sup>114</sup> See Hesychius 5023, Suda 2498, etc.

<sup>115</sup> These manuscripts are: *Boston Houghton* 3 (j<sup>r</sup>), *Athen.* 799 (j<sup>x</sup>), and *Mosq. gr.* 388 (j<sup>y</sup>).

<sup>116</sup> For this manuscript and its Psellian verses, see above, 68–9.

(perhaps also Psellos himself) used the poems for his day-to-day teaching practice.

This also implies that political verse in didactic poems was not confined to court. Rather, political verse retained the overall popularity it must have enjoyed during the preceding centuries, albeit not always on a level where it has left traces.<sup>117</sup> The poems in political verse by Niketas of Herakleia, composed nearly half a century later, may also reflect this use of political verse for didactic texts in non-imperial contexts. The imperial taste, as we have seen in the fragment from the funeral oration to Xiphilinos, was close to the 'popular' taste. By offering his poems to emperors in a metre they would appreciate, Psellos made concessions to a taste considered vulgar by more intellectual standards; but he surely was conscious that these poems could also be read with pleasure by others, amongst them probably his own students. It can thus be argued that the representation of imperial commission is a fiction to a certain degree. The later use of the poems suggests that they had a far broader and more general use and public than the poems and titles themselves suggest. Political verse was not solely used to satisfy imperial tastes, but also to attract a broad public of students.

<sup>117</sup> See, for this phenomenon, M. Jeffreys, 'Byzantine Metrics: Non-literary Strata', *JÖB* 31 (1981), 313–34. For the sudden emergence of political verse in the religious poems of Symeon the New Theologian: Jeffreys, 'Nature and Origins', 167.



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## Competitions

Ever since the time of Homer, when ‘young boys quarrelled over words’ in the agora,<sup>1</sup> public disputes and contests in eloquence have played a role in Greek-speaking culture. Literary or rhetorical contests were an important part of the social and cultural configuration of intellectual communities. Particularly at times when intellectual elites gained in importance and autonomy, these contests were important tools for social self-identification and distinction.<sup>2</sup>

Likewise, the intellectual field in the eleventh century defined itself by constant struggles, contests, and competitions. The sudden expansion of opportunities for social promotion elicited a variety of forms of rivalry at all levels. A good example of this competitive atmosphere can be found in the vivid descriptions by Psellos of jealousy and intrigue amongst the secretaries, the lower level of bureaucracy.<sup>3</sup> The organization of school life in this period was also a factor that fuelled competition. As we have just seen, education was primarily entrusted to schools and private teachers operating on an independent basis. External regulation by an authority was minimal; rather, the organization of education rested upon the informal parameters of reputation and social networks. It is no wonder then that teachers found themselves in a constant struggle with their colleagues.

In the Byzantine eleventh century, as argued above (160–75), the selection procedures for administrative careers included tests aimed

<sup>1</sup> *Iliad* 15.284: ὁππότε κούροι ἐρίσσειαν περὶ μύθων.

<sup>2</sup> The Second Sophistic is a good example; see T. Schmitz, *Bildung und Macht. Zur sozialen und politischen Funktion der zweiten Sophistik in der griechischen Welt der Kaiserzeit* (Munich 1997).

<sup>3</sup> Psellos, *Or. min.* 11 and 12.



at determining the aptitude of the candidates. Candidates wishing to acquire the symbolic capital of intellectual renown had to ‘publish’ themselves through the production of texts (oral or written). By doing this, they exposed themselves to being put to the test. Only by withstanding these attacks, by participating in the game, could they prove their worth and establish a reputation. A rational form of competition was considered as a necessary stage in the development of a career, according to the meritocratic logic advocated by the *logioi*.

These competitions seem to have crystallized into more or less formally organized contests. *Hoi logoi*, especially rhetorical and grammatical skills, formed the core of these contests. In our texts, these contests are usually called ‘contests in *hoi logoi*’ (λογικὸς ἀγὼν or ἀγὼν τοῦ λόγου). Although these terms occur quite frequently in eleventh-century texts, this has never been taken seriously as a cultural or literary phenomenon of importance. Yet it can be demonstrated that these contests provided a framework for textual production. Moreover, poetry seems to have played a prominent role in these contests.

This chapter reveals competition within the intellectual field as a driving force behind the writing of poetry. First, I will define the *logikos agon* as a contemporary phenomenon, referring to an occasion where young men competed with each other in a performative setting. Of special importance were the contests in the *shedos*, a contemporary education exercise; in these contests, poetry occupied a special role. The poetic polemics between teachers and intellectuals are analysed as examples of ‘agonistic’ writings, following a shared pattern and shared vocabulary, intent on using derision, abuse, and humour to damage reputations. A final section focuses on satiric poems of Christophoros Mitylenaios and invective poems of Michael Psellos, reconstructing their exchange and circulation.

### 7.1. THE *LOGIKOS AGON*

Psellos’ works abound with references to the *logikos agon*.<sup>4</sup> The texts describing careers of friends (and of course his own career) frequently

<sup>4</sup> I have investigated this more fully in: F. Bernard, ‘Authorial Practices and Competitive Performance in the Works of Michael Psellos’ (forthcoming).

mention contests that are situated in a rhetorical or otherwise intellectual context.

The funeral oration for Xiphilinos contains references to various kinds of contests. As is often the case, the sometimes vague language in this text hampers our understanding of the subject. The first reference to contests occurs within Psellos' praise of Xiphilinos' eloquence. Here, Psellos praises Xiphilinos' prowess in 'contestations' (*περὶ τὰς ἀντιθέσεις*).<sup>5</sup> He adds the intriguing remark that people such as Xiphilinos and Psellos (*τὸ καθ' ἡμᾶς μέρος*) are likely to encounter jealousy and criticism. It is tempting to take this as a general remark on the hostility that this type of upcoming intellectual attracted.

A more clear-cut reference follows immediately. Psellos tells us that he helped his friend in the battles in the *λογικὸν θέατρον*, and no less did Xiphilinos applaud and support him when Psellos tried to prove his best 'in contests and demonstrations' (*ἐν ἀγῶσι καὶ ἐπιδείξεσιν*).<sup>6</sup> It is not easy to be precise about the meaning of these words,<sup>7</sup> but it seems that the debates had a rhetorical or literary aspect and that they were watched, and perhaps also assessed, by an audience or jury. The words *ἐπίδειξις* and *ἀγών* are mentioned in one breath. The candidates were mutually scrutinized (432.30: *ἀντεξετάζομαι*), which suggests a contest based on comparison of candidates. The *λογικὸν θέατρον* appears here to refer to an occasion where various contenders convened to give proofs of their abilities that were competitively compared to each other.

After this, the oration discusses another kind of intellectual contest: the competitions between teachers in Constantinople for the revered 'thrones' (433.3: *σεμνοὶ θρόνοι*) or teaching positions.<sup>8</sup> When Psellos sketches the lamentable and fragmented state of education in the

<sup>5</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.* 432.17–29.

<sup>6</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.* 432.24–9.

<sup>7</sup> P. Lemerle, *Cinq études sur le XIe siècle byzantin* (Paris 1977), 204, n. 25, draws attention to these declamations and contests, pointing to the archaizing and imprecise vocabulary. I do not think that these contests refer to judicial cases, as proposed by W. Wolska-Conus, 'Les écoles de Psellos et de Xiphilin sous Constantin IX Monomaque', *TM* 6 (1976), 223–43, at 224: see the very frequent use of the words *λόγοι* and derivatives, pointing to a broader concept of intellectual culture.

<sup>8</sup> On this passage, see also J.-C. Riedinger, 'Quatre étapes de la vie de Michel Psellos', *REB* 68 (2010), 5–60, at 37–9; but instead of a struggle for the teaching chairs of rhetoric and philosophy at a state university, I see here primarily a rivalry between the different independent schools.

capital, he links this to the fact that there was no real champion in the contests of *hoi logoi*:

*Public theatra were still organized, and an arbiter presided over them, and the contenders were dexterous. But the contests in hoi logoi did not deserve that name: there were simply a few people who whispered their speeches in a corner.*<sup>9</sup>

The somewhat condescending tone towards the contests held at this time serves to emphasize the pre-eminence of Xiphilinos and Psellos. However, the text makes it clear that the phenomenon existed and was deemed important. Since the contenders are in this case the teachers with their ‘choirs’ (433.12) and ‘*logikoi* phalanxes’ (433.41), the expression οἱ τῶν λόγων ἀγῶνες must refer here to contests between teachers or between schools. The subjects of the contests were broad: apart from rhetoric, which seems to be implied in every instance, Psellos also mentions here generally ‘knowledge and skills’ (433.19–20: ἐπιστήμαις καὶ τέχναις). The contests seem to have been highly formalized: they were held in public, and they were watched by a specialist judge. This judge is called *agonothetes*, in the vein of the metaphor that is used throughout, evoking ancient sports or theatre games. The word *theatron* is also part of this metaphor. The subsequent description of the chaotic state of education continues this imagery. The ‘*thiasos*’ did not hold rhythm, since there was no choir leader. None of the examined candidates (433.15: ἀντεξετάζομαι is again the word used) prevailed over the other. This changed when Psellos and Xiphilinos appeared on the stage. In this instance, *agones tou logou* are closely linked to the context of education. Above all, they seem to have had a decisive influence on the hierarchy of teachers.

Further references to different kinds of contests are to be found in a piece written by Psellos entitled ‘To two students of his who direct writings against each other’ (*Or. min.* 20: *Εἰς δύο τινὰς τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ λογογραφήσαντας πρὸς ἀλλήλους*). He reproaches his students because they address polemical writings to each other. As such, they disturb the good order of his ‘*phalanx of learning*’. It is not time for war, since they are not yet fighting against the real enemy. Their

<sup>9</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.* 433.8–11: Καὶ θέατρα μὲν ἐτελείτο δημόσια, καὶ ἀγωνοθέτης τούτοις προῦκάθητο, καὶ οἱ διαμιλλώμενοι περιδέξιοι οἱ δὲ τῶν λόγων ἀγῶνες ἐψέυδοντο τοῦνομα, καὶ ἐν παραβύστω ἔνιοι τοὺς λόγους ὑπεμιθύριζον.

altercations should remain confined to playful games, as there is no need yet to seek after official positions. Psellos portrays himself as a general in these battles, preparing his pupils as an army. This entails that besides these playful contests between pupils, there are others with a more important issue: obtaining careers (I can see no other way to interpret ἀρχὰς τῶν ἀξιωματῶν).<sup>10</sup> Inter-school contests are clearly being referred to here.<sup>11</sup>

From other sources, too, we learn that competition was stimulated amongst students. The *Neara* closes with an address to the future students of the school of the *nomophylax* at Mangana, advising them not to remain idle, but to 'engage in fine disputes amongst yourselves, and fight the great battle over your reputation in law, keeping in mind that the prize is great, and expecting a very fine reward indeed'.<sup>12</sup> The approving expressions ἡ καλὴ ἔρις and ὁ πολὺς ἀγῶν indicate that this competition was seen as an honourable thing. It is an integral element of the coming into being of a worthy intellectual, bringing with it the prospect of 'good repute' (εὐδοκίμησις, as it is stated here).

References to contests also occur in the funeral oration for Michael Kerouliarios, who contended with his brother as an equal 'sparring partner',<sup>13</sup> and the oration for Konstantinos Leichoudes, who as a student participated in the 'contest over *logoi*'; improvisations are also mentioned here.<sup>14</sup> References to contests in a school context also occur in funeral orations for former students.<sup>15</sup> Here again, battles were fought between rival groups of pupils, whose members supported and cheered for each other. The school provided a framework for these contests, in these texts as well as in the other texts we have discussed here.

For Psellos, these contests were by no means inconsequential pastimes. Within the meritocratic and intellectual ideal he advocated, the games staged in school prefigured later contests over influence

<sup>10</sup> Psellos, *Or. min.* 20.82.

<sup>11</sup> See also Lemerle, *Cinq études*, 216.

<sup>12</sup> Mauropous, *Neara*, §14: τὴν καλὴν πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἔριμ ἐρίζετε, καὶ περὶ τῆς ἐν νόμοις εὐδοκίμησεως τὸν πολλὸν ἀγῶνα ποιείσθε, μέγιστον εἰδότες τὸ ἔπαθλον, καὶ καλὴν ὅτι μάλιστα τὴν ἀμοιβὴν ἐκδεχόμενοι.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Psellos, *Oratio funebris in Michaelem Cerularium*, ed. K. Sathas, *Μεσαιωνικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη* (Venice/Paris 1876), IV, 308–87, at 310.10–11.

<sup>14</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. in Leich.* 392.3–11; see especially the expressions ἀγῶν ὁ μέγιστος (l. 4) and ἡ περὶ τοῦς λόγους πάλη (l. 5); for the improvisations see l. 21 (σχεδίου λόγοι).

<sup>15</sup> E.g. Psellos, *Or. fun. Gautier*, 4.124–5.

and wealth. In several orations directed against detractors, he defends the rationality of the prevailing selection procedures.<sup>16</sup> In *Or. min.* 9, he states that after the ‘games’, which his opponents deemed innocent, real rewards were nevertheless distributed, of which he received more than anyone else.<sup>17</sup> In a similar oration (*Or. min.* 10), Psellos sneers that his enemies did not care when they were defeated in contests over words (51: τὴν ἐπὶ τοῖς λόγοις ἤτταν), but when Psellos also won the serious games they considered their lives miserable. For Psellos, the outcome of contests over words decided the struggles over real assets, presumably the distribution of titles and functions.

The descriptions of *agones* employ a specific vocabulary. Metaphors from the world of sporting events are frequent. The word ἀγών itself reflects this. In *Or. min.* 9, Psellos builds up a long allegory comparing his excellence in the field of letters to various sporting contests (l. 43–63); a similar metaphor is used in the oration for Leichoudes. The world of ancient festivals and theatre games also plays a great role, as we have seen, especially in the oration for Xiphilinos. The word *theatron* is only part of this overarching imagery: in almost all instances where Psellos uses the word, it retains a strong metaphorical sense.<sup>18</sup> Its primary meaning of ‘hippodrome’, ‘sports arena’, or (ancient) ‘theatre’ is still very emphatically in the foreground, in line with the imagery evoked by the words ἀγών and ἀγωνοθέτης. Rather than referring to a group of intellectuals or a fixed place for gatherings, the word *theatron* refers to an imaginary place, an occasion for learned competitions and collective reading.<sup>19</sup> It does not yet, as in later Byzantium, consistently refer to a sociocultural phenomenon.

<sup>16</sup> See also Riedinger, ‘Quatre étapes’, 53–7.

<sup>17</sup> Psellos, *Or. min.* 9.43–56.

<sup>18</sup> See the helpful overview of significations of *theatron* as given in N. Gaul, *Thomas Magistros und die spätbyzantinische Sophistik. Studien zum Humanismus urbaner Eliten in der frühen Palaiologenzeit* (Mainz 2011), 18–23. Eleventh-century occurrences of the word seem to me restricted to the first type defined by Gaul. On *theatron*, see also above, 98–9.

<sup>19</sup> For *logikon theatron* as used for twelfth-century and late Byzantine learned communities, see (among others) M. Mullett, ‘Aristocracy and Patronage in the Literary Circles of Comnenian Constantinople’, in: M. Angold (ed.), *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries* (Oxford 1984), 173–201; P. Marciniak, ‘Byzantine Theatron—A Place of Performance?’, in: M. Grünbart (ed.), *Theatron. Rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter* (Berlin/New York 2007), 277–85.

In many of our texts, we hear of judges, who were to assess the performances of the candidates. In poem 47, Mauroπους mentions that he, in his capacity as a teacher, ‘judged over contests among students and teachers’.<sup>20</sup> This must refer to similar contests in *hoi logoi*, being held amongst both students and teachers. In a letter, Mauroπους also responds to a friend’s request to ‘arbitrate over a battle and give the prize to the best’.<sup>21</sup> It appears that Mauroπους was called upon to judge over *logikoi agones*; he was, to continue the prevalent imagery, an *agonothetes*.

Texts designed for competition and contest are seen as a normal part of the literary output of an intellectual. In his oration for the anonymous *patrikios*, Psellos mentions three kinds of works that the *patrikios* is said to have produced during his studies. One of these is called ‘agonistic’ (*ἀγωνιστικά*): Psellos specifies that such works are written ‘for the contest with rivals in the art [of rhetoric]’.<sup>22</sup> In his oration in honour of Symeon Metaphrastes, Psellos states that Symeon ‘occupied himself resourcefully with all genres of literature (*hoi logoi*), some of them in a more competitive manner (*ἀγωνιστικώτερον*), others in a more friendly one’.<sup>23</sup> I would conclude that writing competitive texts was seen as a very normal part of the career of an intellectual in Byzantium. Occasions for polemics and competitions were sufficiently numerous.

## 7.2. THE SCHEDOS CONTESTS

One specific type of *agon* acquired a particular importance in the eleventh century, especially in relation to poetry: the *schedos* contest.<sup>24</sup> The *schedos*, or schedography, is surrounded by many

<sup>20</sup> Mauroπους 47.24: *κρίνων μαθηταῖς καὶ διδασκάλοις ἔρις*.

<sup>21</sup> Mauroπους, *Ep.* 29.4–5: *τὸ δὲ διαιτῆσαι προσηκόντως τῇ μάχῃ καὶ δοῦναι τῷ κρείττονι τὸ κράτος*.

<sup>22</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. Gautier* 5.163–4: *τὰ μὲν ἀγωνιστικά καὶ πρὸς ἄμιλλαν ἀντιτέχνων*.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Psellos, *Orationes hagiographicae*, ed. E. Fisher (Leipzig/Stuttgart 1994), 7.302–3: *ἄπτεται δὲ καὶ πολυειδῶς τῶν τοῦ λόγου μερῶν, τὰ μὲν ἀγωνιστικώτερον, τὰ δὲ πραότερον*.

<sup>24</sup> On *schedos* as an innovation in eleventh-century education: Lemerle, *Cinq études*, 235–41; A. Markopoulos, ‘De la structure de l’école byzantine. Le maître, les livres et le processus éducatif’, in: B. Mondrain (ed.), *Lire et écrire à Byzance* (Paris 2006), 85–96, at 93–5.

uncertainties (and, sometimes, misunderstandings). The most common definition in the middle Byzantine centuries is that of an exercise composed by a teacher, containing various grammatical problems and difficulties. This exercise would be dictated to the students, who were required to reconstruct the original text correctly.<sup>25</sup> The most specific form of *schede* consisted of texts made up of unintelligible word groups from which the pupils had to extract the correct reading by applying alternative spelling and word breaks.<sup>26</sup> All the *schede* of this more specific form come from the twelfth century, which may imply that it was an innovation.<sup>27</sup>

Psellos mentions the *schedos* in several letters. It clearly formed part of his own teaching.<sup>28</sup> Together with the poems we will discuss here, there is much indirect evidence of the *schedos*, but I could only discover a small number of texts from the eleventh century that might themselves count as *schede*; and even then, their dating and interpretation are insecure. The longest is an intriguing text from a certain Longibardos,<sup>29</sup> who might be the same Longibardos mentioned by Anna Komnene in connection with the *schedos*.<sup>30</sup> The text is a lengthy piece of moral advice directed by a teacher to his students, but the most striking feature is its abundant use of words that contain orthographical difficulties. The second poem of Anon. Schirò, playing with superlatives ending in *-ότατος*, could perhaps also count as a *schedos*. As with the text of Longibardos, the subject

<sup>25</sup> See Hunger, *Literatur*, I, 24–9; R. Browning, ‘Il codice marciano gr. XI.31 e la schedografia bizantina’, in: *Miscellanea Marciana di studi bessaroni* (Padua 1976), 21–34, at 22; G. Schirò (ed.), ‘La schedografia a bisanzio nei sec. XI–XII e la scuola dei SS. XI Martiri’, *Bolletino della badia greca di Grottaferrata* 3 (1949), 11–29.

<sup>26</sup> See the *schede* of Theodoros Prodromos in I. Vassil, ‘Graeca sunt, non leguntur. Zu den schedographischen Spielereien des Theodoros Prodromos’, *BZ* 87 (1994), 1–19, and the texts in L. Polemis, ‘Προβλήματα της βυζαντινής σχεδογραφίας’, *Ἑλληνικά* 45 (1995), 277–302.

<sup>27</sup> For this distinction, see A. Garzya, ‘Literarische und rhetorische Polemiken der Komnenenzeit’, *BSI* 34 (1973), 1–14, at 3–4.

<sup>28</sup> Psellos, *Ep. K-D* 16 and 24.

<sup>29</sup> The text is edited in N. Festa, ‘Longibardos’, *Byz* 6 (1931), 101–222. Festa loosely dated the text to the eleventh century, with some question marks. See also id., ‘Note preliminari su Longibardos’, *BZ* 16 (1907), 431–53.

<sup>30</sup> Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. A. Kambylis and D.R. Reinsch (Berlin/New York 2001), book XV, ch. 7, 9. See also R. Anastasi, ‘Ancora su Anna Comnena e la schedografia’ in: *Studi di filologia bizantina III* (Catania 1985), 77–95, who does not make the connection with Longibardos edited by Festa; and D. R. Reinsch (trans.), *Anna Komnene. Alexias*, 2nd edn (Berlin/New York 2001), 538 and notes.

matter is moral advice, but clearly this is not as important as the training in orthography.

What is striking about the evidence regarding the *schedos* in the eleventh century is that poetic texts in particular contain so much information. There seems to have been a special connection between the *schedos* and poetry. Poems 9, 10, and 11 by Christophoros are arguably some of the most informative sources on school life of this period; all three of them also refer to the *schedos*. Poems 9 and 10 celebrate the excellence of the school of St Theodore in the neighbourhood of Sphorakiou, while poem 11 is directed against the *maistor* of the school of Theotokos of Chalkoprateia.

The praise of poem 9 for the *maistor* Leon and his assistant Stylianos is exclusively based on the claim that they are victorious in the *schedos* contests. The school will never fall as long as Stylianos is the *proximos*, and it will never see a defeat in the *schedos* as long as Leon is *maistor*.<sup>31</sup> It is Leon who has trained the youth in the ‘contests in *hoi logoi*’ (v. 7: ἀγῶνες τῶν λόγων). Any other teacher may take a student of his own and come forward to join battle, but he will soon realize that he is no match against Leon and his students.

Military imagery underlies the vocabulary in this poem. The verb *στομῶσας* (6), ‘providing with eloquence’, can also mean ‘harden’, ‘train’. Leon is said to ‘march out’ (8: ἐξείσι) with his students, trusting in them like weapons (ὄπλοις). The class of pupils is an army going to war, with their teacher as a general.

In poem 10 the *schedos* contests again form a substantial part of the praise for Leon (vv. 13–17):

ῥοῦν ἐμέει σοφίης κούρων αἰεὶ περὶ ὦτα,  
οἷ λιπαινόμενοί τε καὶ εὐλογίην ξυνάγοντες  
τῶν πάντων κρατέουσι νέων σχεδῶν ἐν ἀγῶσιν, 15  
οὐνεκα τοῖσι Λέων γε διδάσκαλός ἐστιν ἄριστος·  
οὐδὲν καὶ κλέος ἔσται ἀγήραον ἡμᾶτα πάντα.

*He emits a stream of wisdom which surrounds the ears of the young,  
who are nourished by it and gather eloquence,  
so that they defeat all other boys in the schedo contests, 15  
because Leon is the best teacher in such matters;  
therefore, he will have immortal fame for all days to come.*

<sup>31</sup> I can see no reason to assume that this poem targets the phenomenon of *schedos* as such, as suggested in Hunger, *Literatur*, II, 26, apparently taking ἤτταν δειωὴν (v. 4) as ‘misery’ caused by the use of the *schedos*, and not as a defeat in a contest.



The link between success in *schedos* contests and the reputation of the teacher could not be established more clearly: Leon's reputation as a teacher will grow thanks to his excellence in training the youth for the *schedos* contests. This reputation is measured by comparison with his fellow-*maïstores* (see v. 2): rivalry between schoolmasters is a prominent feature here, and is an important motivation for the *schedos* contests.

Poem 11 is a fierce assault on the *maïstor* of the school of Theotokos in Chalkoprateia. Christophoros advises everyone to avoid this school. The *maïstor* is personified as Midas, because he sells his *schede* to his students, turning the school of Chalkoprateia into a 'schedoprateion', a shop selling *schede*. Again, the *schedos* is an important element in the reputation of teachers, albeit here in a negative way.

These three poems testify to the strong sense of solidarity within communities formed in a particular Constantinopolitan school, as well as to the animosity towards rival schools. Pupils and their teacher formed a kind of clique. These groups engendered relationships of friendship that continued well into adulthood. Texts and performances played a great role in the communal culture of these circles. For example, in one letter the young Psellos vows that he will sing the praises of his teacher, together with the rest of the choir.<sup>32</sup> The poems of Christophoros, defending his own teacher and attacking rivals, follow the same pattern. I am inclined towards the possibility that Christophoros composed these poems when he was himself still a pupil. He had at any rate a close personal connection to the school of Sphorakiou. The position of the poems towards the beginning of the collection may also point to this. It is surely no coincidence that the school of Chalkoprateia is the target: the churches of Sphorakiou and Chalkoprateia were in close proximity to each other.<sup>33</sup> The rivalry between schools thus corresponds to rivalry between neighbourhoods of Constantinople.

Mauropous also engages intensively with the *schedos*. Most scholars believe that Mauropous was opposed to the phenomenon of the *schedos* as such.<sup>34</sup> However, I argue here that this belief is based

<sup>32</sup> Psellos, *Ep. K-D* 12, p. 14, l. 15–18.

<sup>33</sup> P. Magdalino, *Constantinople médiévale. Études sur l'évolution des structures urbaines* (Paris 1996), 40 and n. 138.

<sup>34</sup> See Hunger, *Literatur*, II, 26; see also below for the interpretations of Mauropous 68 and 33.

on erroneous interpretations. Rather, Mauropous' image of the *schedos* such as it appears from his poems is perfectly in line with that of his contemporaries.

In poem 68, entitled *Εἰς σχέδος*, Mauropous apparently takes sides for the school of the Forty Martyrs. He challenges an adversary, claiming the divine assistance of the Forty Martyrs. Warlike imagery is emphatically present: the martyrs are a 'phalanx' of hoplites, and the challengers dare to 'engage in battle'. The language of threat and bragging resembles Christophoros' poems in defence or in attack of schools (9–11). But above all, Mauropous' poem shows affinities with the first poem of Anon. Schirò. Both texts are composed in defence of the same school, the school of the Forty Martyrs. In the poem of Anon. Schirò, the feast day of the patron saints is celebrated at length: it arguably provided the occasion for the *schedos* contest. The poem of Anon. Schirò is directed to the students, spurring them on to perform well, while in Mauropous 68 a rival teacher is addressed. Both poems boast divine support, and repulse the enemy with warlike language. Both poems also use the same line of argument: with so many allies at their side, the students of the school of the Forty Martyrs cannot fail to win. Even the phrasing is remarkably similar (compare vv. 38–9 of Anon. Schirò with Mauropous 68.2–3).<sup>35</sup>

Schirò maintained that Mauropous' poem was not written by Mauropous but by a pupil,<sup>36</sup> but this is difficult to believe, since the poetry collection as a whole bears so clearly the stamp of Mauropous as its author.<sup>37</sup> According to Karpozilos, this piece, which he describes as 'hard to interpret', was written by Mauropous as part of a personal feud, while he himself was opposed to the *schedos*.<sup>38</sup> To my mind, it makes more sense to connect Mauropous' piece with the very similar poems by Christophoros and Anon. Schirò. Just like these texts, Mauropous' poem was written on the occasion of a *schedos* contest, as a sign of his solidarity with the school of the Forty Martyrs. He conducts a war, not against the phenomenon of *schedos* but against his adversaries in the *schedos* contest. The curious vocative *σχιδευτά* (v. 5) is not a denigrating term for any *schedos* writer, it is a

<sup>35</sup> See also Schirò, 'Schedografia', 22.

<sup>36</sup> Schirò, 'Schedografia', 17–18, 22.

<sup>37</sup> As also pointed out by R. Anastasi, 'Giovanni d'Euchaita e gli skedikoi', *SicGymn* 24 (1971), 61–9, esp. 67. Anastasi interprets *schedos* as an improvised piece written by Mauropous.

<sup>38</sup> Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, 94.

denigrating term for a *bad* one.<sup>39</sup> Engaging in *schede* was a very normal thing to do for a teacher, and if we would deny that Mauropous, one of the most renowned teachers of his time, participated in it, we would believe all too rashly in the image of Mauropous as a reclusive intellectual free from phenomena we consider base and ordinary.

Nor do we find the slightest negative sentiment towards the phenomenon in his other poems. Poem 70, entitled ‘On the engraving with cinnabar of the *schede*’, celebrates a *schedos* written by the emperor Konstantinos Monomachos, who is expressly named in the first line. The imperial colour of the ink, cinnabar, testifies to the fact that it was written by the emperor. Scholars have found this poem very problematic, and have consistently tried to reject the idea that it is connected to schedographic exercises.<sup>40</sup> However, I can see no objection to taking the poem in a quite literal way. Mauropous uses the word *σχέδος*, as in poem 68, to refer to that phenomenon of ‘schedography’ apparently considered so abject by modern scholars. The second verse, *ἀληθῶν νοῦν ἐντίθησι τοῖς νέοις*, ‘he instils the right mind in the youngsters’, refers to the pedagogical value of his schedographic exercises, in a similar way to that in which Christophoros praised Leo’s ability to educate pupils with his *schede*.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, there is a letter of Psellos which also praises an edition of

<sup>39</sup> The term also occurs in a lemma in a thirteenth-century manuscript with *schede*, see I. Vassiss, ‘*Τῶν νέων φιλολόγων παλαίσματα. Ἡ συλλογὴ σχεδῶν του κώδικα Vaticanus Palatinus gr. 92*’, *Ἑλληνικά* 52 (2002), 37–68, at 63.

<sup>40</sup> J. Hussey, *Church and Learning in the Byzantine Empire 867–1185* (Oxford/London), 53–4 and E. Follieri, *Giovanni Mauropode. Otto canoni paracletici a Gesù Cristo* (Roma 1967), 9, n. 6, connect this poem with the *Neara*; G. De Gregorio, ‘Epigrammi e documenti. Poesia come fonte per la storia di chiese e monasteri bizantini’, in: C. Gastgeber and O. Kresten (eds), *Sylloge Diplomatico-Palaeographica I. Studien zur byzantinischen Diplomatie und Paläographie* (Vienna 2010), 9–134, here 42–8 sees in this poem an act of official legislation, taking *χαραγὴ* as a specific technical term (which it does not need to be), and, surprisingly, considers the fact that it is written for young people as an argument that it is *not* related to an edition of *schede*. R. Anastasi, ‘A proposito del carne 70 di Giovanni Mauropode’, in: *Lirica greca da Archiloco a Elitis. Studi in onore di F.M. Pontani* (Padua 1984), 243–6 interprets this poem as the consecration of a prize given to pupils. Hunger, *Hochsprachliche*, II, 25, concedes (with some amazement) that Momomachos might actually have composed schedographies. Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, 86, calls this poem ‘problematic’, but hesitatingly suggests that it is related not to imperial legislation, but to schedography. Markopoulos, ‘De la structure’, 94, interprets the poem in a straightforward way, with which I agree.

<sup>41</sup> Christophoros 9.6.

*schede* made by Monomachos;<sup>42</sup> it is very likely that this refers to the same work, and it corroborates the fact that Monomachos himself composed the *schede*, rather than simply appending his signature to them. Mauropous' poem precedes two book epigrams on a book belonging to Monomachos stipulating the exact liturgical service for his patron, Saint George; as elsewhere in the manuscript, Mauropous has here grouped some similar poems together.<sup>43</sup> Poem 70 was thus simply conceived as a book epigram accompanying and praising the edition of *schede* made by Monomachos. The poem reflects Mauropous' keen interest in schedographic exercises, as well as his ability to flatter Monomachos on his achievements.<sup>44</sup>

*Schedos* contests are also present in the didactic poems of Niketas of Herakleia. In some of his poems, he urges his pupils to learn the rules well, in order to be able to stand firm in the *schede* contests.<sup>45</sup> No doubt Niketas was also a teacher who had to prepare his students for upcoming contests.

A series of poems by Anon. Sola (poem 7 in the edition) is clearly conceived as a set of pieces designed for an inter-school context, although in these poems the *schedos* is not mentioned. The poet derides rival teachers and pupils, and boosts the morale of the own school, which I have proposed to identify with the school belonging to the monastery *ton Nosion* on the coast of the sea of Marmara.<sup>46</sup> The second of these short pieces runs like this:

ὦ φθέγμα κυκλώπειον, ἔρρου πρὸς πέτρας·  
ἐν νοσιαῖς ἄδουσιν ἀλλ' ἀηδόνες.

*Oh, Cyclopean voice, away with you to the rocks!*  
*In their 'nests' (Nosiai), however, the nightingales sing.*

<sup>42</sup> Psellos, *Ep. Sathas* 115, p. 361, l. 18: ἡ τοῦ σχεδῶς ἐκδόσεως. L. Sternbach, 'Spicilegium Laurentianum', *Eos* 8 (1902), 65–86, here 73–4 for the connection between both texts. Anastasi, 'Al proposito', denies that Psellos' letter concerns a *schedos*; however, the wording is clear enough.

<sup>43</sup> This grouping does not necessarily imply that poem 70 was written with the same patronage project in mind, as suggested in De Gregorio, 'Epigrammi e documenti', 47.

<sup>44</sup> Anastasi, 'Al proposito', 244 considers this adulatory tone as incompatible with Mauropous' style, but the long poem 54 is a sufficient counterproof.

<sup>45</sup> See an overview of relevant passages in: J. Schneider, 'La poésie didactique à Byzance: Nicétas d'Héraclée', *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé* 58 (1999), 388–423, at 416–17.

<sup>46</sup> F. Bernard, 'The Anonymous of Sola and the School of Nosiai', *JÖB* 61 (2011), 81–8.

There is a pun here on the name of the school (Nosiai), which is very similar to the word for ‘nests’ (νοσσιά). The pupils are likened to nightingales, singing beautifully, whereas the adversaries are compared to a Cyclops. In another piece, the adversary is identified as a certain Nikolaos ‘the rhetor’. This was undoubtedly a teacher from a rival school, which had to fight a battle against the school of Nosiai. There is again an aggressive tone: the rival is advised to ‘go away’. This piece, just as the other poems of Anon. Sola, seems to have been pronounced just before the declamations (of *schede*?) began. Perhaps the pieces in this series were alternating responses of two rival participants in the contest.

Many of the poems above share some typical characteristics: they defend a school and deride adversaries from another school, bragging that the rival school will be defeated in the upcoming *schedos* contest. The following question remains: If the poems themselves were not real *schede* in their own right, how should we understand the exact purpose or signification of these poems within the context of *schedos* contests? The challenges addressed to adversaries and the exhortations addressed to students suggest that the teacher pronounced these poems before the contest began, influencing the opinion of the public and the judges, and encouraging the pupils. Be that as it may, the poems confirm the patronage-like bonds that connect teachers with their students and former students. They defend the school community at the moment when its reputation was most at stake: in the inter-school contests.

### 7.3. DERISION AND ABUSE

Humour often has an aggressive purpose in Byzantium.<sup>47</sup> It was an effective weapon for mocking other people. Laughter brought joy for the audience not involved, and shame for the persons who were.

<sup>47</sup> On the abusive aspect of Byzantine humour, see B. Baldwin, ‘A Talent to Abuse: Some Aspects of Byzantine Satire’, *Byzantinische Forschungen* 8 (1982), 9–28; L. Garland, ‘And His Bald Head Shone Like the Moon . . . : An Appreciation of the Byzantine Sense of Humour as Recorded in Historical Sources of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries’, *Parergon* 8 (1990), 1–31; P. Magdalino, ‘Tourner en dérision à Byzance’, in: E. Crouzet-Pavan and J. Verger (eds), *La dérision au Moyen Âge* (Paris 2007), 55–72.

It took away their dignity and damaged their reputation. Satirical poetry is a constant feature in Byzantium.<sup>48</sup> Although the twelfth century is the main focus in this, the eleventh century was also rich in satirical poetry. As in the Western Middle Ages,<sup>49</sup> its intention was to damage other people, not to amend general vices. Satiric poetry from the eleventh century does not share characteristics with the Lucian strand of satire so much as it does with ancient *psogos*, the iambic tradition, and the Hellenistic mocking epigram. Physical features, accidents, or rumours are all permissible aims. Bragging and threats are surprisingly sharply formulated. Sex, alcohol, and violence make unexpected appearances.

Christophoros' satire extends to all segments of society, and addresses a range of human vices and deficiencies.

We have already encountered Christophoros' debunking of Basileios Choirinos (poem 84): a pun on the surname, a rumour of adultery, and the accusation of impertinence here secured Basileios' exclusion from a group of friends. Adultery is also the theme of poem 31, where a certain Moschos (literally: 'calf') has grown horns, so that he is now a bull.

One of his best known poems is a satirical poem that derides a monk Andreas (poem 114), who collects relics of saints, believing against all odds that they are real. Gluttonous monks (poem 135), an overly sanitary official (poem 132), robbers of dead bodies (poem 82) are all upbraided. I will here concentrate on poems of which the action radius falls within the intellectual field. The purposes and modes of expression in these poems remain firmly intellectual. This intellectualism converges with the more risqué and aggressive features sketched above.

Poem 23 of Christophoros derides an instance of failed display by Georgios, a certain *grammatikos*:

*Εἰς τὸν γραμματικὸν Γεώργιον, γράψαντα βουστροφηδὸν ἐσφαλμένως*  
*Ὡς κρεῖττον ἦν σοι βοῦν ἐπὶ γλώττης φέρειν*  
*ἢ βουστροφηδόν, οἷάπερ γράφεις, γράφειν.*

*To the grammarian Georgios, who wrote a failed boustrophedon*  
*How much better would it be for you to carry an ox on your tongue*  
*instead of writing an ox turned verse such as you write!*

<sup>48</sup> R. Romano, *La satira bizantina dei secoli XI-XV* (Turin 1999).

<sup>49</sup> L. Kendrick, 'Medieval Satire', in: R. Quintero (ed.), *A Companion to Satire* (Malden, Mass. 2007), 52–69, here 62.

The poem is based on a pun on the proverb *βοῦν ἐπὶ γλώττης φέρειν*, meaning ‘to keep silent’. This is associated with the word *βουστροφηδόν*, literally, ‘as an ox turns’, perhaps referring here to a verse that remains the same if written backwards.<sup>50</sup> The name of the grammarian, Georgios—literally, ‘farmer’—provides a further twist in this wordplay. This poem illustrates what is at stake in these games. After all, a *boustrophedon* is arguably nothing more than a playful demonstration of skills, a typical learned *epideixis*. But there was a public that watched carefully over possible mistakes in such a demonstration, prepared to debunk and mock the author if it did not match up to the requirements. Whether a slightly jesting camaraderie or an attempt to damage the reputation of a rival, the poem judges a professional teacher on the basis of a text he has written as a demonstration of skills.

Less sophisticated is a poem of Christophoros on the rhetor Menas (poem 37), but that it was damaging to the reputation of this teacher is clear:

*Εἰς τὸν ῥήτορα Μηνᾶν φιλοπότην ὄντα  
Ῥήτωρ ὁ Μηνᾶς, ἀντὶ τοῦ πείθειν πίνων.*

*On the bibulous rhetor Menas  
Menas is a rhetor, but he likes a glass more than a class.*<sup>51</sup>

In the case of poems like this one, the addressee and his deficiencies must have been known to the audience of the poem. Probably, this audience, just like Georgios and Menas themselves (a *grammatikos* and a *rhetor*, respectively), consisted of teachers or intellectual peers.

I turn now to a poem that seems to have been overlooked to date. It is a little poem of two verses that, in one manuscript (*Vat. gr. 672*), follows an oration of Psellos in defence of his own *grammatikos* (*Or. min.* 17).<sup>52</sup>

*Τὴν ἑνδεκάτην ὁ ψυλοῦν γραφὴν θέλων  
νοῦ καὶ φρενῶν πέφυκας ἐψιλωμένος.*

*Wanting to strip the written word ἑνδεκάτην of its aspiration,  
you are indeed stripped of mind and senses.*

<sup>50</sup> Crimi, *Canzoniere*, 69–70.

<sup>51</sup> Literally: ‘Menas is a rhetor who drinks instead of persuading.’

<sup>52</sup> Psellos, *Or. min.*, p. 65 for the text of the poem.

Someone is being derided here for having written the word *ἐνδεκάτην* with a *spiritus lenis* instead of a *spiritus asper* (in spoken Greek of the time, the difference could no longer be heard, and mistakes were frequently made). As Kurtz and Drexler, the first editors of the oration and the poem, admitted, it is not clear to what or to whom these verses refer.<sup>53</sup> Littlewood has suggested that they refer to the same grammarian defended in Psellos' oration.<sup>54</sup> However, the connection with the oration is not clear: in the oration, Psellos defends his grammarian against accusations that he was sloppily dressed and had long hair; there is not a word about accusations of making grammatical mistakes, so the oration can hardly be an answer to this poem, nor vice versa. The oration and the poem probably formed part of ongoing 'battles' with (the same?) rival colleagues of Psellos' schoolmaster. In this scenario, it is quite likely that Psellos himself was the author of this epigram. In this poem as well, the target of the criticism is a text circulating among the peers of the hapless author. These peers were apparently going to great lengths to detect any slight technical mistake made by their rival. As usual, a pun is used to drive the message home.

The agonistic poems in the corpus of Mauropous display all the characteristics of the poems we have just discussed: they are addressed to rival teachers and quarrel over the correctness and appropriateness of written texts. Rather than personal abuse and invective, Mauropous' poems debate the validity or invalidity of rhetorical or metrical standards. This makes them more properly 'polemic' than the satirizing poems of his colleagues.

Poem 33 is a poem in answer to a criticism from a reader of poem 32, the epigram on the Crucifixion:<sup>55</sup> the reader had found fault with the expression *ἀνθ' οὗ πραθείς*, which occurred in Mauropous' epigram. Poem 33 ardently defends the use of *ἀντί* after the verb *\*πιπράσκω* instead of a plain genitive, which would be grammatically correct. Mauropous argues that the betrayal of Christ (the subject of the contested epigram) was in fact clearly a 'gift in exchange for something in return' (v. 10: *ἀντὶ λήψεως δόσις*), so it was an exchange; only, money was one of the exchanged elements. The use of *ἀντί* clarifies the argument: his opponent too will have to admit that at least he has the preposition in mind when he puts the purchase into

<sup>53</sup> Michael Psellos, *Scripta Minora*, I, 64.

<sup>54</sup> Psellos, *Or. min.*, p. 65.

<sup>55</sup> See above, 87–90.



words, even when he does not really write it down (vv. 23–4). Mauropous states that clarity is for him the most desirable feature in writing. Strikingly, Mauropous often uses the preposition *ἀντί* itself in the formulation of his poem, as if to exemplify its usefulness (see vv. 10, 36, 38, 43).

In this poem we encounter a passage referring to the *schedos* that is not easy to understand. Since my interpretation differs from the existing commentaries,<sup>56</sup> I will examine it more closely. While fulminating against what he calls the ‘hair-splitting of schoolmasters’, Mauropous writes (vv. 28–34):

ἀλλ’ ὡς ἔοικε τῆς σαφηνείας χάριν  
 ἄχρηστος ἢ δύστηνος ὑμῖν εὐρέθη·  
 τὸ γὰρ σαφές τε καὶ πρόδηλον ἐν λόγοις  
 λογογράφοις ἤδιστον, οὐ σχεδογράφοις,  
 καὶ ταῦτα κλήσῃ τὸ σχέδην κεκτημένοις.  
 γρίφους δὲ σοὶ πλέκοντι τοὺς ἐν τῷ σχέδει  
 ἐπαχθές ἐστὶ πᾶν πρόχειρον καὶ σχέδην.

*As it appears, you considered that unlucky [preposition]  
 unnecessary for the sake of clarity,  
 because clarity and transparency in writing  
 are cherished by authors (logographoi) but not by schedographoi,  
 although they have acquired ‘easily’ as their name.  
 For you too, plaiting riddles in your schedos,  
 everything that is easy and straightforward is despicable.*

Anastasi supposed that Mauropous in poem 33 was venting his unfavourable opinion about a group of schoolmasters he calls *σχεδικοί*.<sup>57</sup> In Anastasi’s view, Mauropous envisaged three categories: *logographoi*, *schedographoi*, and those making riddles using *schede*. The second category is linked by Anastasi, in line with his view on the phenomenon of the *schedos*, to the practice of improvisation, the third to language purists, both categories being criticized here by Mauropous. The word *σχέδην* would refer to this aspect of improvisation. However, *σχέδην* has the established meaning of ‘gently’,

<sup>56</sup> Anastasi, ‘Skedikoi’; Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, 91–2; S. Euthymiades, ‘L’enseignement secondaire à Constantinople pendant les XIe et XIIe siècles: modèle éducatif pour la Terre d’Otrante au XIIIe siècle’, *Νέα Ρώμη* 2 (2005), 259–75, here 267.

<sup>57</sup> Anastasi, ‘Skedikoi’.

which needs to be distinguished from *σχέδιος*, ‘improvised’. Moreover, I do not believe it is put forward here as a serious etymology. On the contrary: Mauropous avers that there is a contradiction between, on the one hand, the similar sounds found in *σχέδην* and *σχεδογράφοι*, and, on the other, their different meanings. The property *σχέδην*, ‘easy’, is exactly what these schedographers are not, according to Mauropous, despite their similar-sounding name. The word group *καὶ τὰυτα* (v. 32) has to be taken as adversative: clarity is not cherished by schedographers, and this is so *even though* they have a name that hints at ‘easily’. Besides, the conjunction *καὶ* (v. 34) connects *σχέδην* with *πρόχειρον*, not with *ἐπαχθές*.<sup>58</sup>

The motivations for the attack have also been sought in a difference between two pedagogic methods. In this struggle, Mauropous allegedly opposed the usefulness of the *schedos*. In my view, however, this poem is a typical example of a *logikos agon* between teachers putting each other’s texts to the test. Mauropous’ arguments are no general opinions; rather, they are made for the occasion. He makes use of the fact that his opponent writes *schede* in order to reproach him for applying techniques from *schede* to other fields that have nothing to do with it. To be sure, Mauropous regards obscurity as a hallmark of *schede* (they are consistently seen by the Byzantines as a form of riddle), but he uses this feature to underpin the specific argument of this poem: clarity is to be preferred over hair-splitting correctness.

Mauropous himself clearly considered poem 33 as part of a literary battle: he calls it ‘battling with (or over) words’ (v. 50: *λόγοις μάχεσθαι*), and claims that the preposition he defends has ‘won’ in two ways: on grounds of clarity, and of authority (v. 45: *νικᾷ δι’ ἀμφοῖν*).<sup>59</sup> Mauropous raises the discussion to the level of authority among *logioi*. He addresses his opponent with the title of ‘judge of words’ (22: *ἐρήσομαι γὰρ τὸν δικαστὴν τοῦ λόγου*), before demolishing his argument. This is, of course, nothing but sarcasm: Mauropous exposes his adversary’s audacity in assuming this title and seeking to judge the writings of others. This is taken up in the closing lines,

<sup>58</sup> Contrary to Anastasi, ‘Skedikoi’, 68 (‘odioso ed approssimativo’), and R. Anastasi (trans.), *Giovanni Mauropode, metropolita di Euchaita, Canzoniere* (Catania 1984), I, 26 (‘fastidioso e improvvisato’).

<sup>59</sup> What precisely *ἀμφοῖν* refers to is glossed over in existing studies. The conjunction *ἔπειτα* at line 41 clearly distinguishes two main arguments: up to line 40, Mauropous emphasizes clarity as a motivation, whereas *ἔπειτα* introduces the argument that the use of *ἀντί* is attested and can be demonstrated.

where Mauropous employs a cherished pun on the word *logos*: ‘That the protector of the word (*logos*) should fight with words (*logoi*) in an unreasonable way (*eulogos*), is something totally deprived of reason (*aneulogos*).’<sup>60</sup> By assuming for himself the function of protecting *logos* itself, Mauropous disdains to continue debating with people who are not worthy. His enemy is effectively denied the prerogative of being associated with *hoi logoi*. It is a battle over the assumption of certain positions of authority: Mauropous, exposed to an unpleasant attack, denies his adversary even the authority to criticize him.

Poem 34 is another polemical poem. This time, Mauropous initiates an attack against texts written by others. The poem, twelve verses long, bears the title ‘Against those who versify in an inappropriate manner’ (*Πρὸς τοὺς ἀκαίρως στιχίζοντας*). It begins with the well known dictum ἄριστον πᾶν μέτρον, which is also the very first verse of the whole collection. Mauropous develops the notion μέτρον into a criterion by which he judges texts that claim this very name; i.e. poetry; cf. v. 3: μέτροις ὀρίζω καὶ λόγους τοὺς ἐμμέτρους. But since he discerns a lack of μέτρον in the poems of his opponent, he denies that this claim is valid (v. 5: μέτρον δ’ ἄμετρον οὐδαμῶς μέτρον λέγω). He advises his rival not to make bad use of this good thing, because ἀμετρία is a great evil, especially when it destroys the nature of μέτρον (vv. 11–12).

It is not easy to identify the main point of criticism in this poem, which is surely completely untranslatable. What is the specific kind of μέτρον that Mauropous advises his opponent to apply in his poems? He might intend it in the general sense of ‘moderation’, thus proposing that poems should be of a moderate and appropriate length.<sup>61</sup> This reiterates the main concern regarding μέτρον in poem 1. This interpretation seems also to be supported by v. 4 (μέτρον δ’ ἂν εἴη πᾶν τὸ συμμέτρως ἔχον), since the word συμμέτρως clearly only refers to the sense of ‘moderation’. The title may also be interpreted thus: that the poets under attack did not adapt their verses to the occasion (*καιρός*). Perhaps the critique implies that they had written poetry indiscriminately on unsuitable subjects. The connection between actions and words is also brought out by the second verse, where

<sup>60</sup> Mauropous 33.49–50: οὐκ εὐλόγως δὲ τοῦ λόγου τὸν προσάτην/λόγοις μάχεσθαι σφόδρα τῶν ἀνευλόγων. I thank Marc Lauxtermann for help with the translation.

<sup>61</sup> So Hörandner, ‘Poésie profane’, 258.

Mauropous says that 'he himself knows to apply measure to deeds and words'.<sup>62</sup> The poem is in this respect very similar to the critique in poem 1 levelled at verbose writers.

It has also been suggested that the word μέτρον has here the specific signification of 'metre'. If that is the case, Mauropous may have had in mind poems that did not observe the prosodic rules of the ancient quantitative metres, and then one thinks of poems composed in political verse.<sup>63</sup> The expression μέτρον ἄμετρον (v. 5), indeed, has contemporary currency: Nikethas Stethatos says that the hymns of his great hero Symeon the New Theologian are composed ἐν ἀμέτρῳ μέτρῳ,<sup>64</sup> here undoubtedly referring to the unprosodical, purely accentual metres used by Symeon.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, it is evident that the text under discussion is a poetic text (see v. 3: λόγους ἐμμέτρους), so it focuses precisely on the premise that the poem under critical examination was called 'poetry' in the first place. Most probably, both significations of 'moderation' and 'metre' may have been implied by Mauropous, who also elsewhere shows himself sensitive to double meanings of words.

It is surely no coincidence that Mauropous placed this poem at this point in the collection. It corresponds perfectly with the genre and intentions of the previous poem: just like poem 33, it is a move in a literary battle, an answer in the chain of response between authors who expose their own writings and react to those of their rivals.

Poems 60 and 61 also form part of an intellectual battle. Poem 60 is a riddle on 'the ship'. In poem 61, Mauropous attacks someone who had made improper use of his own riddle poem. This man had used other words (δι' ἑτέρων), but the riddle remained the same, and he had passed it off as a poem of his own.<sup>66</sup> Mauropous unmasks the 'plagiarism', asserting his own authorship. This reflects the

<sup>62</sup> Mauropous 34.2: *καγὼ δὲ μετρεῖν πράξω εἰδὼς καὶ λόγον.*

<sup>63</sup> M. Jeffreys, 'The Nature and Origin of the Political Verse', *DOP* 28 (1974), 141–95, at 166.

<sup>64</sup> Niketas Stethatos, *Vita Symeonis*, ch. 37, l. 12.

<sup>65</sup> See Jeffreys, 'Nature and Origin', 166. Cf. also J. Koder, 'Ο Συμεών ο Νέος Θεόλογος και οὐῖμοι του', in: A. Markopoulos (ed.), *Τέσσερα κείμενα για την ποίηση του Συμεών του Νέου Θεολόγου* (Athens 2008), 1–36, here at 20.

<sup>66</sup> See also R. Anastasi, 'Sul carme 61 Lagarde di Giovanni di Euchaita', *Orpheus* 6 (1985), 162–4, who however does not seem to think that Mauropous upbraids an act of plagiarism.

self-consciousness of our poets with regard to their poems, which are clearly felt to be their personal creations.

The puns are typical for this kind of poem: his adversary's riddle is not new (v. 11: *καινός*), but is vain (*κενός*), and while seeming a hero (v. 12: *ἥρωος*) he has proven to be some idle chatterer (*λήρρος*). The famous iambic verse *ἄνθρωπ', ἄπελθε, τὴν σκάφην ἀνατρέπεις* (quoted at v. 5) acquires a new meaning: tradition has it that Iambe, a washerwoman, uttered this first iamb when Hipponax was about to overturn her *σκάφη* (washing trough). But the word can also mean 'ship', and it is of course this meaning that Mauropous wants us to pick up here, since his opponent had 'overturned' Mauropous' ship riddle. The rhetorical structure of the poem follows a familiar pattern: it ironically repeats or confirms the exaggerated assumptions of the opponent, then unmasks him, preferably with a telling pun, and closes with some aggressive repulsions.

The same ingredients return in Christophoros 40, the poem that accuses an *idiotes* of having assumed the right to judge over the writings of others. As we have seen above (178–9), it is an attempt to bar a fortuitous intruder from the elite, accusing him of assuming a position of *logios* without proceeding through the preliminaries regarded as necessary.

I want here to concentrate on the polemical structure and tone of the poem. The piece is clearly conceived as a personal attack, intended to ridicule the intellectual assumptions of the person concerned. Sarcasm and irony are important weapons in the poem. For instance, presumably when exposing the impostor's tendency to confirm stupid statements (parts of the text are lost here), Christophoros remarks: *τὸ κάρτα φάσκει* (v. 20). *τὸ κάρτα* is a collocation that occurs also in Herodotus, and is used there, as it is here, in a slightly ironic sense: it mockingly confirms an erroneous or ridiculous opinion. In this way, Christophoros sarcastically exposes the individual's presumed cleverness.

Throughout the poem, the fiction of the live setting of an oral contest is evoked. Christophoros addresses the pretentious opponent at the beginning (vv. 1–c.15), but then switches to describing him in the third person, apostrophizing Constantinople and the prophet Jeremiah (vv. 16–48). Then he addresses his opponent again, setting the scene of a live dialogue: his opponent has to answer, 'for you do not prattle any more now, do you, now that you want to be the respectable judge of *hoi logoi?*' (vv. 50–1). The impostor, of course,

keeps silent, whereupon Christophoros proceeds to give him advice. This little non-dialogue further puts the opponent in an awkward position, and gives Christophoros the advantage of retaining authority. The poem closes (c.68–76) with a typical direct threat that conjures up a physical fight: the enemy is urged to ‘go away’ (ἀπελθε, in an emphatic anaphora at vv. 68 and 71).

Poem 9 of Michael Grammatikos is a short mocking epigram which likewise advises someone to stay out of the realm of *hoi logoi*:

νόμοις μόνοις σχόλαζε καὶ λόγους ἔα·  
ὡς γὰρ κρίνειν ἔοικας, οὕτω καὶ γράφειν.

*Occupy yourself with laws only, and leave hoi logoi alone;  
because you seem to write in the way you judge.*

This poem attacks a judge, or perhaps another official with a judicial role. Just like the other poems discussed in this chapter, it is a response to a deed of literary display: the judge had meddled in the field of *hoi logoi* by writing (γράφειν) a work. Michael obviously had read this work and found it not up to standard. It is not exactly clear what is implied by the comparison between the writing skills and judicial skills of the person under attack. Does it simply mean that, since he was a bad judge, he is now also a bad author? Or does it suggest that he wrote in a legal jargon? In any case, this poem allows us to presume that Michael, who had received the title of *grammatikos*, took the same elitist stance as his more well known fellow poets.

A much more vitriolic piece is the fourth poem of Michael Grammatikos, scorning a bishop and attacking him for a number of moral and intellectual shortcomings. The structure of this poem is unique, in that Michael allows his opponent to take the floor and to speak out for himself. The alleged speech of the bishop makes up the greatest part of the poem. It is a fine piece of sarcasm: it is precisely the things that the bishop brags about that make him look like a ridiculous boor.

As is apparent from all these texts, competition was an important element in the works of all known poets of our period. The fierce rivalries between schools, the relatively unregulated situation of teachers and intellectuals, the fact that they operated within a short distance of each other (speaking in geographical as well as social terms), the importance of personal reputation: these all provided a suitable and fertile framework. The urge to display one’s credibility as an intellectual, as a newcomer, or as a settled member forced each

participant to expose his works to his peers, putting his reputation at risk. In the same vein, reacting to a provocation with a well crafted poem demonstrated one's own wit. As a result, if well constructed, an 'agonistic' poem could at once harm the reputation of the rival teacher and enhance that of the writer.

The habits and forms of textual (poetic) circulation also played a role. We can reconstruct most of the poetic *agones* as the exchange of poems in written form. Each poetic contribution, to use the prevalent vocabulary, constitutes a 'blow', as in a boxing match, or a Homeric duel. However, we should by no means exclude the possibility that these texts were read aloud, not exactly to the opponents, but within a group of friends, enjoying the jokes and the abuse directed at common adversaries, perhaps feeling relieved that they were included in the group and not the laughing stock of the day.<sup>67</sup>

In the remaining section of this chapter, I shall examine two poetic *logikoi agones*, one to be found in the works of Christophoros, the other in Psellos. In both, poetry has a wide range of weapons at its disposal. Wit, sarcasm, invective, and metaphorical language are employed on several different levels, intellectual, moral, personal; but all the weaponry is used for the same purpose: to damage the opponent.

#### 7.4. POETIC CONTESTS IN CHRISTOPHOROS' COLLECTION

Christophoros 36 is a piece that contains all the characteristics of a *logikos agon*. Its title is damaged; all that can be reconstructed is: *Εἰς τινα ὑπερλαλήσαντα φίλου ἔνεκεν τῶν*, a gap of several letters, followed by *κατ' αὐτοῦ, ἐννοούμενον δέ*. The verb *ὑπερλαλέω* is in later Greek almost exclusively used in the sense 'speak in defence of', and is followed by a genitive case. Between *τῶν* and *κατ'* there was presumably a verb contrasting with *ἐννοούμενον δέ*, so it seems that a certain accusation or insult was not outspoken but 'intended'.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>67</sup> On the circulation of this kind of poem, see P. Magdalino, 'Cultural Change? The Context of Byzantine Poetry from Geometres to Prodomos', in: F. Bernard and K. Demoen (eds), *Poetry and its Contexts in Eleventh-century Byzantium* (Farnham/Burlington 2012), 19–36.

<sup>68</sup> Crimi, *Canzoniere*, 79–80 reconstructs the title somewhat differently, suggesting that *ἐννοούμενον* could mean 'think of his own interests'.

From the text, it appears that Christophoros had to engage in battle against two friends. The poem begins with some examples of struggles between mythological heroes, in which two friends fight one single enemy. Christophoros then advises everyone to leave the scene of battle. His opponent in particular would do well to flee while he can, because he will not be able to endure even one attack from Christophoros. Remarking that he has already fled, Christophoros develops the main point of his attack: his cowardly enemy chose to remain anonymous. After a lengthy comparison of his opponent with a wild boar attacking from his hidden den, the poet vows that he will only need one deadly blow to eliminate his enemy.

The poem is permeated by a language of threat and violence. The advice to keep away for his own safety (v. 10) gives the impression of a fighting scene. The invitation to come forth and begin the fight (v. 23) also conjures up a kind of arena. The contest between Christophoros and his adversaries is taking place as the poem unfolds. Christophoros directly addresses his opponent(s), describing their reactions in the present tense. The opponent flees before Christophoros' attack (v. 13: *ἤδη δὲ φεύγεις*). The adverb *ἤδη* refers emphatically to the present. His opponent thereupon hides in a shelter (vv. 19 and 33), which perhaps means that he has not responded to a previous attack by Christophoros. The present fight is represented as a fight with spears (34: *βαλῶ σε ῥημάτων ἀκοντίῳ*) or an exchange of arrows (19: *πέμπεις βέλη*). Both opponents try to 'hit' each other (16: *βάλλειν*, 37: *σου κατοίσω καιρίαν μίαν*, 38: *βολὴν ὑποστής*). Just as in poem 40, the fiction of a live setting of an ongoing dispute or battle is evoked.

The following passage describes the fight and its weapons in terms that refer to an exchange of written texts. Ink and pen are the weapons used (vv. 8–12):

*καὶ φευγέτω πᾶς, ἀλλὰ καὶ φεύγων ἄμα  
χάρτην, μέλαν, κάλαμον εἰς γῆν ῥιπτέτω·  
αὐτὸς δὲ φεύγε καὶ πρὸ τῶν ἄλλων ὄλων·* 10  
*πληγὴν ἐμοῦ γὰρ οὐχ ὑποίσεις καλάμου·  
τοῖνυν μακρὰν ποῦ φεύγε τῶν Προτασίου.*

*And let everyone flee, but in his flight  
he'd better drop paper, ink, and pen on the ground!  
You too, flee before all others; 10  
for you will not endure the wound from my pen.  
So, flee to somewhere far from Protasiou!*



The representation is that of an arena in which both opponents, armed with their writing tools, engage with each other. The expressions ‘wound from a pen’ (v. 11: *πληγῆν καλάμου*) and ‘hitting with the spear of words’ (v. 34: *βαλῶ σε ῥημάτων ἀκοντίῳ*) unite the fiction of the physical fight with the real exchange of poems. Poems are represented as ‘blows’, with words and writing tools used as ‘weapons’. The engagements are described in terms of hitting, and, indeed, ‘killing’ (vv. 25 and 37). Christophoros will ‘drown’ his opponent in words (v. 24: *κατακλύσω λόγοις*). At the end of the poem, he boasts that one more ‘blow’ will finish his opponent. The *logikos agon* is in this way represented as an exchange of alternate blows. This may refer to the concrete form of circulation of this kind of writing: namely, small poetic pamphlets which are exchanged in succession, one in response to the other.<sup>69</sup>

As can be expected in a *logikos agon*, the piece is also an example of intellectual *epideixis*, proving Christophoros’ value as a *logios*. The following fragment demonstrates this (vv. 26–9):

χολᾶς γινώσκω καὶ μέμηνas ἀσχέτως  
καὶ κάπρος οἶα πῦρ ὄρας καὶ πῦρ πνέεις,  
χλούνης δὲ μάλλον ἢ μονιὸς τὸ πλέον·  
θήγεις δὲ τοὺς ὀδόντας ὡς ὁ θῆρ ὄδε·

*I see you becoming mad and raging without restraint,  
and like a wild boar you see fire and breathe fire,  
or no, rather a hog: or, better: a swine.  
In any case, you whet your teeth as does this animal.*

The words *κάπρος*, *χλούνης*, and *μονιός* are three synonyms for the more common designation *ὑς ἄγριος* (wild boar). Their appearance here can serve no other purpose than to demonstrate Christophoros’ lexical knowledge. In addition, comparing someone with a kind of pig is, of course, particularly insulting.<sup>70</sup> The pig also had the proverbial ring of a simpleton who seeks to criticize wiser men (see Theocritus 5.23), which may or may not have inspired Byzantine authors to call their opponents in polemics ‘pigs’, frequently coupled with the idea that the opponent cannot control his anger, and/or strikes from a

<sup>69</sup> Crimi, *Canzoniere*, 80, applies the term ‘tradizione pamphlettistica’ to this poem. I cannot resist the temptation to point to the Dutch word ‘schotschrift’, literally ‘shooting writing’, which fits very well the circumstances and use of this genre.

<sup>70</sup> On *agroikia*, see above 187–92. Perhaps *Il.*, 13.471–5 is alluded to.

hidden place (cf. Manuel Philes II.10). At the same time, the image of the wild boar in Christophoros 36 links up with the mythological comparison with Meleager at the beginning of the poem.

Interestingly, this poem 36 is followed by some other pieces that are clearly agonistic. Poems 37 to 40 are all biting sarcastic pieces, each time attacking a different person. They are heterogeneous in form and length, and, corresponding to procedures applied elsewhere (see above, 148–53), Christophoros strives for variety by inserting in the middle of the group a poem in a different metre (poem 38, in hexameters). Poems 37 to 40 have thus been consciously placed after poem 36.

Poem 37 is a sneering monostich directed at the rhetor Menas, attacking his bibulousness (cf. *supra*). Poem 38 upbraids the soldier Ioannes, who stole his comrades' belongings. The poem is badly damaged (only the second verse remains), but I think Crimi's reconstruction of the argument cannot be far mistaken: the clue is that Ioannes appears as a valiant warrior, not by acquiring booty in war but by stealing others' belongings in the absence of war.<sup>71</sup>

Poem 39 is addressed to a eunuch called Eugenios.<sup>72</sup> Apparently, Eugenios would have liked to change his name to Eugeneios. This literally means 'well bearded', which would cover up his emasculated sex. Christophoros reminds him that his name is unmistakably, and always has been, *Εὐγένιος* with a *iota*. The poet continues by saying that in spoken words (*ἐν τοῖς λόγοις*) Eugenios/Eugeneios may retain his diphthong, if that pleases him. The joke is that in pronunciation there is no difference between both names, so Christophoros' friendly suggestion that he retain the *ει* in pronunciation is of no use to Eugenios.<sup>73</sup> His favour is indeed 'empty' (v. 6: *κενή χάρις*). The poem closes with the conclusion that Eugenios' name should always

<sup>71</sup> Crimi, *Canzoniere*, 81, who also adduces AP 11.333 (not 9.333, as is printed) as an example.

<sup>72</sup> For the interpretation of this poem, I elaborate here the suggestion of Crimi, *Canzoniere*, 82.

<sup>73</sup> R. Anastasi, "Difonia" nell'XI secolo a Bisanzio', in: *Studi di filologia bizantina IV* (Catania 1988), 121–41, here at 140, interprets this poem differently, in function of his argument that there existed different pronunciations of Byzantine Greek: Christophoros allows Eugenios to pronounce (*ἐν τοῖς λόγοις*) his name with a genuine /-ei/ sound. This interpretation, besides resting on highly unlikely phonological premises, misses the joke: Christophoros' concession is not really a concession, precisely because the pronunciation of *Εὐγένιος* and *Εὐγένειος* is the same.

be written (8: ἐκ τῶν γραμμάτων) with a iota. It is a typical satirical poem, deriding somebody's vanity in an ironic way.

Something we should not doubt is the personal involvement of both poets and addressees. It is striking that all opponents are named, and sometimes very specifically identified. However, in nearly all cases, we have no additional sources to shed more light on the identity of the persons involved. In my view, there is only one exception to this rule. This is Basileios Xeros (a surname literally meaning 'dry'), *krites* of Hellas and Peloponnesos, object of this satirical epigram of Christophoros (poem 20):

*Εἰς τὸν πρωτοσπαθάριον Βασίλειον καὶ κριτὴν τὸν Ξηρόν*  
*Καλῶν θάλασσαν, τοῦτο δὴ τὸ τοῦ λόγου,*  
*ὁ Ξηρὸς εὐρῶν ὁ κριτῆς τὴν Ἑλλάδα,*  
*ξηρὰν ἀφήκε, μὴ λιπῶν μηδ' ἰκμάδα.*

*On the protospatharios and krites Basileios Xeros*  
*An ocean of goods, as the saying goes,*  
*that was how krites Xeros found Hellas,*  
*but he left it dry, not leaving even a drop behind.*

We have seals of this Basileios Xeros, which mention his forename, name, and precise function as *krites* of Hellas.<sup>74</sup> This makes him one of the very few identifiable non-imperial figures in Christophoros' collection. He may even be the same person as a *krites* of Thrakesion, also named Xeros, who is mentioned in a letter of Psellos (*Ep. Sathas* 48). Strikingly, this Xeros is also criticized by Psellos for his harsh taxation.

## 7.5. PSELLOS AND SABBAÏTES: A POETIC AGON

Psellos 21 and 22 are two lengthy and remarkable invective poems. Psellos 21 attacks a monk called Sabbaites, named as such in the poem, censuring him for what Psellos perceives as unjustified abuse. Psellos 22, written in the form of a liturgical *kanon*, is directed against a certain Iakobos, upbraiding him for his bibulousness. In some

<sup>74</sup> For an overview of these seals, see M. Jeffreys et al., *Prosopography of the Byzantine World*, <<http://pbw.kcl.ac.uk>>, unit Basileios 20193, surname Xeros, *kritēs* of Hellas and Peloponnesos.

manuscripts of both of these poems, they are preceded by a short mocking epigram attacking Psellos himself. As a result, in these manuscripts, as well as in the edition, two sides of an agonistic exchange are presented. But the precise reconstruction of the *agon* is a complicated matter. I will here present and further elaborate the reconstruction of the text history as presented by Leendert G. Westerink, the modern editor of the poems.

In one of the three manuscripts transmitting Psellos 21 (*Vat. Urb. gr.* 141 (XIVc.) = s<sup>u</sup> in Westerink), the poem is preceded by the following two-line epigram:

Τοῦ Σαββαΐτου πρὸς τὸν Ψελλόν  
 Ὀλυμπον οὐκ ἤνεγκας, οὐδὲ κἄν χρόνον·  
 οὐ γὰρ παρήσαν αἱ θεαί σου, Ζεῦ πάτερ.<sup>75</sup>

*Of Sabbaites against Psellos*

*You did not bear Olympus, not even for a year,  
 because, father Zeus, your goddesses were not there.*

The background to this witty mock epigram is Psellos' U-turn in his monastic vocation. Psellos donned the monk's habit, probably in 1054, and left Constantinople for the monastery of Horaia Pege on Mount Olympus in Bithynia, only to return shortly thereafter when Monomachos died and Theodora ascended the throne.<sup>76</sup> This was bound to provoke hostile reactions: in his *Chronographia*, Psellos himself admits that his comeback at court aroused jealousy.<sup>77</sup> He even thought it wise to watch his step for a while in his contacts with the empress. The poem alludes to improper relationships between Psellos and women, perhaps even with the empress herself.

Sabbaites was a persistent and important enemy of Psellos. A monk called Sabbaites is also known from a letter of Psellos to the metropolitan of Amaseia (*Ep. Sathas* 35).<sup>78</sup> In this letter, Psellos expresses his hope that one of his protégés, a former student who is now *krites* of the Armeniakon theme,<sup>79</sup> is living up to expectations. He also says that this

<sup>75</sup> Text: Westerink, *Poemata*, 259.

<sup>76</sup> Ljubarskij, *Προσωπικότητα και έργο*, 53.

<sup>77</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VI, §14: *βασκαίνομαι τῆς ἀφίξεως*.

<sup>78</sup> For the connection with this letter, see L. Sternbach, 'Ein Schmahgedicht des Michael Psellos', *Wiener Studien* 25 (1903), 10–39.

<sup>79</sup> According to E. de Vries-Van der Velden, 'Psellos et son gendre', *Byzantinische Forschungen* 23 (1996), 109–49, this protégé is Psellos' own son-in-law, whom she identifies with Basileios Maleses.

*krites* will need the metropolitan's protection, because 'Sabbaites washes him in many insults, involving you also, and me no less, although I am far away, as well as the emperor and God'.<sup>80</sup> Psellos adds, however, that he will not waste any more words on him. The targets of Sabbaites' insults (emperor, God, patriarch) correspond with poem 21, lines 14 to 16. There can be little doubt, I think, that the same man is meant.

Westerink suggested that Sabbaites had been a monk in the monastery of St Sabas in Jerusalem, but that he was now a *ptochotrophos* in the monastery of Olympos, where Psellos had resided.<sup>81</sup> His occupation as a *ptochotrophos* is, according to Westerink, made clear by some references in the poem where Sabbaites emerges as a (hypocritical) protector of the poor (vv. 29 and 304).

We return now to the particular problems of the exchange between Psellos and Sabbaites. In s<sup>u</sup>, poem 21 has the title 'Of Psellos against Sabbaites', which is analogous to the title of the epigram 'Of Sabbaites against Psellos'. Sabbaites' poem itself is never mentioned as such in Psellos 21, but it is clear that Psellos had been insulted by Sabbaites. When he says: 'you pour out your tongue, filling it with abuse' (28), he may have had the specific vulgar abuse of the poem in mind. Sabbaites' attack is frequently referred to in the poem: it is characterized as 'censure' (ἐλεγχος, cf. lines 20, 36, 64), 'blasphemy' (βλασφημία, cf. lines 28, 83, 129), and an insult (269: λοιδορία). That poem 21 targets someone called Sabbaites is beyond doubt: there are frequent puns on his name (vv. 4, 113).

A reconstruction is complicated by the fact that the poem deriding Psellos unexpectedly turns up in one of the two manuscripts transmitting Psellos 22 (*Marc. gr.* 408 (XIVc.) = a<sup>m</sup>). The poem is there expressly identified as the work of a certain monk Iakobos from the monastery of Synkellos: Στίχοι Ἰακώβου τινὸς μοναχοῦ ἀπὸ τῆς μονῆς τοῦ Συγκέλλου κατὰ τοῦ Ψελλοῦ. The lemma accompanying Psellos 22 clarifies that the poem is a direct answer to Iakobos' poem: 'Upon hearing this, Psellos composed a *kanon* against the same Iakobos.'<sup>82</sup> Iakobos' name is also inscribed in the poem's acrostic Μέθυσον Ἰάκωβον εὐρύθμως ἄδω, Κώνστας (I, Konstas, sing in beautiful

<sup>80</sup> Psellos, *Ep. Sathas* 35, 269.15–17: ὁ γὰρ Σαββαίτης πολλαῖς αὐτὸν ταῖς ὕβρεις καταπλύνει συμπεριλανθάνων καὶ σέ, οὐδὲν δὲ ἤττον κάμει, πόρρω καθήμενον, καὶ τὸν βασιλέα, καὶ τὸν θεόν.

<sup>81</sup> Westerink, *Poemata*, 258.

<sup>82</sup> Psellos 22.lemma: Ταῦτα ἀκούσας ὁ Ψελλὸς ἐποίησε κανόνα κατὰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰακώβου.

rhythms of Iakobos the drunk). Konstas is the secular name of Psellos, who assumed the name Michael only after donning the monk's habit. The poem that was purportedly composed by Iakobos counts four lines in a<sup>m</sup>; the last two are identical to Sabbaites' poem:

Ἦ δέσποτα Ζεῦ καὶ πάτερ καὶ βακλέα,  
ὄβριμοβουγιάε καὶ βαρυβρέμων,  
Ὀλυμπον οὐκ ἤνεγκας κἄν βραχὺν χρόνον·  
οὐ γὰρ παρήσαν αἱ θεαί σου, Ζεῦ πάτερ.<sup>83</sup>

*Oh master Zeus, father and stick bearer,  
mighty braggart, roaring loud,  
you did not bear Olympus, not even for a year,  
because, father Zeus, your goddesses were not there.*

Westerink concluded that this four-line epigram should in its entirety be attributed to Sabbaites, because Psellos 22 does not show any sign of having been written in answer to a previous insult, whereas Psellos 21 bears the stamp of being a direct response to such an epigram. Moreover, Psellos called himself Konstas in poem 22, a name he no longer used after his monastic vocation. In this scenario, poem 22 was written before 1054, as a moral diatribe against the bibulous monk Iakobos, but in a<sup>m</sup> (or a manuscript that served as a model to it), it came to be accompanied erroneously by Sabbaites' poem. Psellos 21, instead, is a genuine response to that poem. The chronology confirms this: Psellos 21 was probably written during the reign of Isaakios Komnenos, since it mentions a male emperor who has appointed a new patriarch (this would refer to Leichoudes becoming patriarch in 1059).<sup>84</sup>

I would even add a further argument in favour of the attribution of the entire four-line epigram to Sabbaites. In the second line of this poem, the word *βαρυβρέμων* occurs. This word is not common: the *LBG* lists only five other occurrences.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, the word is also used by Psellos in this very poem 21 (v. 116). It seems almost

<sup>83</sup> Text: Westerink, *Poemata*, 270.

<sup>84</sup> Westerink's reconstruction has been accepted by subsequent studies, for example E. Maltese, 'Osservazioni sul carne *Contro il Sabbaita* di Michele Psello', in: A. M. Taragna (ed.), *La poesia tardoantica e medievale* (Alessandria 2001), 207–14, here at 208, n. 4. Sternbach, 'Schmähgedicht' connects the poem against Psellos rather with Psellos 22 than 21; his chronological arguments were refuted by Ljubarskij, *Προσωπικότητα και έργο*, 153, who nevertheless also considers the poem as a work of Iakobos.

<sup>85</sup> *LBG*, s.v. 'βαρυβρέμων'.

impossible to imagine that Psellos' use of it in his response was not, consciously or unconsciously, reminiscent of the occurrence of this rare word in Sabbaites' poem. Hence, I hold it very probable that poem 21 is an answer to Sabbaites' four-line poem that likens Psellos with Zeus not enduring Mount Olympus.

This reconstruction, however, does not wholly explain why the scribe a<sup>m</sup> so confidently attributes the epigram to a certain monk Iakobos. I would not immediately exclude the possibility that the poem, whoever the author was, had a wide circulation in the capital, perhaps primarily in an oral form, and was on various occasions picked up by enemies of Psellos. It could have been a popular joke in Constantinople, orally transmitted among people allied against the controversial figure of Psellos. Some of them dared to write it down and send it to him, perhaps, as is evident here, adding or leaving out some verses. In later times, it became associated with various enemies of Psellos, of whom Iakobos must have been one.<sup>86</sup> In one of Psellos' letters, he seems conscious of being called 'Zeus' by some.<sup>87</sup> In this scenario, it would be impossible to identify an author, but it would increase our awareness of an oral and popular undercurrent to agonistic poetry.

The poetic exchange between Psellos and Sabbaites shows that the *logikos agon* can embrace different formal genres. Sabbaites' poem can be labelled as a satirical epigram, with a Christophorean *pointe* exploiting the identical name shared by the mythological mountain on which Zeus lives and the Bithynian mountain where Psellos had retreated. Psellos' answer, by contrast, is a genuine *psogos*, employing the same techniques as the encomium, but now with opposite content. Yet they operate within the same framework: damaging each other's reputations, and outdoing each other in linguistic and rhetorical violence and wit.

A closer look at Sabbaites' poem reveals its nastiness. There is the crude hint that Psellos could not live up to the monastic vow of chastity. The poem may also insinuate alleged indecent relationships between Psellos and the empress.<sup>88</sup> This is reinforced by the address

<sup>86</sup> Psellos likely continued to use his secular name Konstas/Konstantinos even when a monk; see R. Volk, *Die medizinische Inhalt der Schriften des Michael Psellos* (Munich 1990), 3.

<sup>87</sup> Psellos, *Ep. K-D* 38.

<sup>88</sup> Ljubarskij, *Προσωπικότητα και έργο*, 153, remains sceptical about this hypothesis.

βακλέα. It is a *hapax*,<sup>89</sup> related to the vernacular word *βάκλον*, from the Latin *baculum*, meaning ‘stick’.<sup>90</sup> The vernacular word is deliberately out of tune with the learned, if somewhat exuberant, pseudo-epic vocabulary that surrounds it. Consequently, *βακλέας* may very well hide a coarse sexual innuendo, which would justify Psellos’ indignation.

Psellos’ answer in poem 21 is a stupefying stream of abuse and insults. A considerable portion of the poem consists of addresses in the vocative, ranging from unflattering to outrageous. Again, as in other contests, the attack revolves principally around the question of whether Sabbaites has enough authority to censure people who are in a higher position. In a substantial portion of the poem (vv. 35–83), introduced by the question ‘Who are you to censure and chastise people better than you?’,<sup>91</sup> Psellos aims to undermine this assumed authority.

The contest is as much an intellectual competition between two poets as a discussion with a moral content. At one point, Psellos explicitly moves their controversy onto an intellectual level, attacking Sabbaites’ lack of learning and the improper way he uses the only techniques he masters (vv. 160–70):

ὦ γνώσεως ἄμοιρε τῆς τῶν κρειπτόνων, μαθημάτων ἄδεκτε τῶν σοφωτέρων, φύσις δὲ πλήρης πνευματουμένων γνάθων γλωπτοκρότων τε τεχνίτα λεξειδίων· ὦ καινὲ ῥήτορ, γῆθεν ἐκφύς ἀθρόον, τὰς εὐρέσεις ἄτεχνε καὶ τὰς ἰδέας,	160
τὰς δὲ στάσεις ἔντεχνε τὰς ἀμφιρρόπους καὶ δεινὴ τὴν ἔννοιαν ἢ καὶ τὴν φράσιν· ὦ πρὸς καταδρομὴν μὲν ἢ κοινὸν τόπον θερμουργεῖ καὶ πρόχειρε, καχλάζων ὄλος, τοὺς δὲ τρόπους ἄτεχνε τῶν ἐγκωμίων.	165 170

<i>You are deprived of the knowledge of better things, and you have not received more advanced education, you creature full of puffy cheeks, technician of resonant little words! Novel orator, suddenly sprung from the earth,</i>	160
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<sup>89</sup> LBG, s.v. ‘βακλέας’.

<sup>90</sup> LBG, s.v. ‘βάκλον’.

<sup>91</sup> Psellos 21.36: *τίς ὦν ἐλέγγεις καὶ κατάρχεις κρειπτόνων.*



*lacking skills in invention and styles,* 165  
*but most experienced in ambiguous staseis*  
*and skilled in both ideas and phrasing.*  
*In invective and commonplace*  
*you are ready and enthusiastic, being all gurgles;*  
*yet in the figures of encomium you are incompetent!* 170

Sabbaïtes is discredited because he has not received proper education. The accusation that Sabbaïtes is a novel orator, sprung forth from the earth, ties in particularly well with this. In spite of the skills he may have, he does not meet the formal requirements of education. This shows again that established *logioi*, who control the educational system, advance education as a necessary condition for any level of credibility.

Yet these accusations do not depict Sabbaïtes as a complete boor, since Psellos admits that he has some skills. Rather, the charge is that those limited skills are only used to the detriment of other people. Of the aspects of rhetorical education mentioned, Sabbaïtas masters only those that can harm other people. The terminology for these aspects of rhetorical education (*ideai*, *staseis*, etc) clearly derive from Hermogenes. The *koinos topos*, the commonplace, is to be understood here in its technical rhetorical sense; namely, an accusation that makes use of unproven general statements against vices.<sup>92</sup> The references to gurgling and puffed cheeks suggest that Sabbaïtes somehow manages to produce literary products that may charm on a superficial level but are merely idle chatter. This appears especially from the line *γλωττοκρότων τε τεχνίτα λεξειδίων* (v. 162), which might well refer more specifically to Sabbaïtes' poem. The adjective *γλωττοκρότος*, a neologism, may refer to the rhythm of the poem, while the expression 'technician of nasty little words' (as the pejorative term *λεξειδία* may be translated), might reflect the cunning, but odious, neologisms in Sabbaïtes' poem.

Despite these skills, Psellos accuses Sabbaïtes of lacking higher forms of knowledge (which for Psellos amounts to 'philosophy'). Psellos' tactic is not to question the efficiency of Sabbaïtes' attack (this also appears from line 171: 'tongue knowing expressions that can cut through'), but to depict this achievement as the act of a dangerous sophist. This is also expressed by the word *δεινός*, at line

<sup>92</sup> H. Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik* (Munich 1960), §409.

166 and also further in line 185: ‘mischievous and sly one, with a dangerously cunning (δεινός) mind!’.

Just as in some other poems we have discussed, Psellos aims to depict Sabbaites as an animal; unsurprisingly, alongside other animals, Sabbaites is likened to a cow (v. 18) or cattle (128), bringing to mind images familiar to *agroikia*. The poem also evokes a simultaneous oral exchange, just as in Christophoros 36 and 40. In Psellos 21, this takes the form of a lawsuit. Psellos acts as a prosecutor, while Sabbaites stands on trial as the accused. After an introductory statement, Psellos opens the interrogation, expecting an answer: ‘Now I ask you, and give a quick answer!’ (v. 35).<sup>93</sup> The string of questions examining Sabbaites’ authority is followed by a long stream of invectives, after which another series of questions is introduced by a call to stand up and respond: ‘I now return to [my] interrogations, father! Stand up before me and speak out clearly!’<sup>94</sup>

Psellos clearly strove to compose a poem demonstrating a dazzling wealth of learning. As Maltese pointed out, the poem teems with ideological and cultural references, such as allusions to patristic ideas and cultural practices of exorcism.<sup>95</sup> Maltese concludes that the *psogos*, although apparently spontaneous, remains a typically Byzantine intellectual construction. This is corroborated by Conca’s study, which points out the rich intertextual background and intricate rhetorical construction of Psellos’ poem.<sup>96</sup> The *logikos agon*, although seemingly rather coarse, is clearly conducted at the level of display of knowledge. It is difficult to believe that we have to take seriously the claim that this poem was written *ex tempore* (v. 8: ἐσχεδίασται).

Besides the more subtle allusions pointed out by Maltese and Conca, the frequency of direct and unmistakable quotes of whole verses from ancient poetry is striking. Verses 210 and 275–6 are identical, or nearly identical, to Euripidean verses.<sup>97</sup> There are also some other reminiscences that clearly function as allusions. Verse 248, ἔστηκα καὶ πέπτωκα τῶμῳ κυρίῳ, only becomes relevant when

<sup>93</sup> Psellos 21.35: Πλὴν ἀλλ’ ἐρωτῶ, καὶ δίδου θάπτον λόγον.

<sup>94</sup> Psellos 21.211–12: ἄνεμι δ’ αὐθις εἰς ἐρωτήσεις, πάτερ, καὶ μοι πρὸ ταρσῶν στήθι καὶ σαφῶς λέγε.

<sup>95</sup> Maltese, ‘Osservazioni’.

<sup>96</sup> F. Conca, ‘La lingua e lo stile dei carmi satirici di Psello’, *Eikasmos* 12 (2001), 187–96.

<sup>97</sup> Psellos 21.210 = Eur., *Iph. in Taur.* 569; Psellos 21.275–6 = *TGF* fr. 687.

the reader recalls the passage in the letter of Paul to the Romans (Romans 14.4), where Paul says he will only accept censorship from his Lord, just as Psellos refuses to accept critique from Sabbaites.

Apart from that, mythological details, neologisms, and clever word games abound. Not all of these have yet been brought to the surface. Verses 114–15, for instance, which constitute yet further insults in the endless stream of abuse, are a clever demonstration of biblical allusion and cunning wordplay:

*ὃ βροῦχε σαρκῶν καὶ ψυχῶν ἐρυσίβη,  
κάμπη λογισμῶν, ἀκρίς ἐνθυμημάτων.*

*Oh locust of flesh, and rust of souls,  
Caterpillar of thoughts, grasshopper of arguments!*

This echoes a passage from the Old Testament book of Joel, where great disasters destroy the crops.<sup>98</sup> In this way, Sabbaites is represented as the fourfold plague that destroys every valid thought or argument. But there is also another twist in the second of these verses: the words *κάμπη* and *ἀκρίς*, ‘caterpillar’ and ‘grasshopper’, resemble the words *καμπή* (‘sudden turn’) and *ἀκρισία* (‘confusion’). These words acquire a meaningful sense when connected to the rhetorical terminology of *λογισμοί* and *ἐνθυμήματα*. As a result, one can also interpret the second verse in this way: Sabbaites undermines a sound use of rhetoric, ‘suddenly upsetting thoughts’ and ‘confusing arguments’.

As in the other agonistic poems, the language of violence plays a major role. Just as in Christophoros 36 and 11.5, we encounter threats that the opponent will be destroyed if he dares to approach, and he is advised to flee as far as possible (vv. 292–301). There is also the *topos* that words bring honour, so that such a despicable person as Sabbaites in fact does not deserve to have a poem addressed to him (v. 309); this is something that we have also encountered in Maupos 33. In his letter concerning Sabbaites, Psellos had haughtily vowed not to waste any words on him.<sup>99</sup>

In Psellos’ poem, too, words are represented as weapons. This is a sample from the endless succession of abusive vocatives (vv. 171–6):

<sup>98</sup> Joel 1.4: τὰ κατάλοιπα τῆς κάμπης κατέφαγεν ἡ ἀκρίς, καὶ τὰ κατάλοιπα τῆς ἀκριδος κατέφαγεν ὁ βροῦχος, καὶ τὰ κατάλοιπα τοῦ βροῦχου κατέφαγεν ἡ ἐρυσίβη.

<sup>99</sup> Psellos, *Ep. Sathas* 35, p. 270, l. 4–5.

ὦ γλώσσα τὴν σφάττουσαν εἰδυῖα φράσιν  
 δῆμων ἀνάπτα, λαομουλτοσυστάτα·  
 ὦ δάκτυλοι πλήττοντες οἰάπερ βέλη  
 καὶ βραχίων δόρατος εἰσβάλλων πλέον  
 καὶ καλαμῖς τέμνουσα πολλῶν καρδίας  
 μέλαν τε τὴν μέλαιναν ἐγγράφον δίκην. 175

*Oh tongue, which knows murderous expressions,  
 agitator of the people, provoker of uproar amongst the crowd,  
 fingers which harm like arrows,  
 arms which strike heavier than a spear,  
 pen which cuts into the hearts of many,  
 and ink, which inscribes a black lawsuit! 175*

As in Christophoros' poem 36, the writing tools of the participants in the confrontation are likened to weapons. The pen inflicting wounds is also present here. The *logikos agon* is represented in terms of a real fight with its own weapons and rules. The power of words to damage reputations is evident here; it is also implied that Sabbaites struck a popular chord with his words.

Psellos opposes the strength of his own wit to these damaging insults. The final section of the poem (vv. 306–21) deals with the impact this poem will have on Sabbaites. He has become a plaything for his verse and has been ridiculed by his iambs.<sup>100</sup> In these instances, Psellos pays conscious attention to the poetic form of his invective. The poetic form seems to add extra weight to the witty and abusive character of the text.

The poems discussed in this chapter can be seen as part of rhetorical or intellectual competitions. These competitions were sometimes formalized contests in a school context, sometimes loose polemics, but both kinds functioned according to similar rules. The poems were thus anchored in a reading context that was essentially social and often performative. The category *ἀγωνιστικά* is a contemporary term applied to such writings, and quite exactly reflects the purpose and intent of these writings. It was part of the job of a *logios*, who was caught up in the continuous struggles in the intellectual field. The poems employ a tone and voice that we may call

<sup>100</sup> Psellos 21.313–4: τὸν Σαββαῖτην . . . τοῖς ἐμμέτροις τέθεικα παίγιον λόγους and 317: τοῖς ἰάμβοις τοῖς ἐμοῖς τεθεῖς γέλως.

satirical, playing an intricate game of subtexts and puns. The subtle humorous games test the intellectual capacities of the audience and their willingness to play the game. At the same time, these poems reflect ideological antagonisms and petty rivalries between colleagues, dynamics that shaped the intellectual field of this period.

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## Patronage

Literary patronage is an elusive concept. Studies of literary patronage in Byzantium are few and far between, and it is only for the twelfth century that the picture is less bleak.<sup>1</sup> And although text and image often cooperate in patronage projects, existing studies often ignore textual evidence when dealing with the patronage of art.<sup>2</sup> An attempt to reveal the patronage of poems necessarily entails some difficulties. It is particularly hazardous to try to establish the precise relationship between text-immanent features and the wishes, tastes, or commands of the patron.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, patronage tends to conceal itself. As a consequence of the ethical resistance to greed and ambition in the field of *hoi logoi*, explicit requests for remuneration are rare (although they do occur, as we will see). Apparently, poets hoped for a more or less automatic or tacit system of service and rewards. This holds especially true for poets who had already attained a position of some renown. As a result, it is difficult to retrieve the concrete terms of negotiations between poet and patron.

<sup>1</sup> M. Mullett, 'Aristocracy and Patronage in the Literary Circles of Comnenian Constantinople', in: M. Angold (ed.), *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries* (Oxford 1984), 173–201; E. Jeffreys, 'Why Produce Verse in Twelfth-century Constantinople?', in: P. Odorico, M. Hinterberger and P. Agapitos (eds), «*Doux remède . . .*» *Poésie et poétique à Byzance. Actes du IVe colloque international philologique, Paris, 23–24–25 février 2006* (Paris 2009), 219–28. For poetry before 1000, see M. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres. Texts and Contexts*, vol. 1 (Vienna 2003), 34–6, raising some 'admittedly difficult questions' (p. 35). The second volume of this work will deal with questions of patronage.

<sup>2</sup> See V. Dimitropoulou, 'Giving Gifts to God: Aspects of Patronage in Byzantine Art', in: L. James (ed.), *A Companion to Byzantium* (Chichester 2010), 161–70, pointing out the importance of textual evidence for understanding patronage in Byzantine art (although epigrams are not dealt with).

<sup>3</sup> On this question, see M. Mullett, 'Dancing With Deconstructionists in the Gardens of the Muses: New Literary History vs ?', *BMGS* 14 (1990), 258–75, at 274.

This chapter, therefore, is an analysis of the *representations* of patronage rather than of patronage itself. I will ask how material support for the production of texts is motivated and negotiated. Through the texts we can discern the value that poetry claims to possess, and see how it proposes to exchange this value for other kinds of services.

Some obvious elements often found in other patronage systems are significantly absent in the Byzantine eleventh century. To begin with, it is clear that there is no 'market' for poetic texts: poems are not distributed amongst the public; there is no system of buying and selling.<sup>4</sup> The particular circumstances of textual circulation simply do not permit this. Moreover, literary patronage in Byzantium is not institutionalized: there is no official post of court poet. If poets are rewarded for their work, this happens on an occasional basis. I think we may retain the distinction, made by Alain Viala, between a 'logic of service' and a 'logic of recognition'.<sup>5</sup> The latter implies a conception of art as art, while the former rests upon the concept of literature as a social tool; evidently, Byzantine literary patronage can be seen within such a 'logic of service', which thrives on immediate exchange and the imperative of the occasion rather than on an artistic programme.

Studies of patronage in pre-modern societies have shown that patronage is channelled through personal relationships.<sup>6</sup> The production of and rewards for literature are the outcome of a commitment of the author and the patron on a personal and social level. In this way, patronage is part of the network of social relationships, which have to be reconfirmed at every new occasion. Our poets entertained extended social networks, as did all Byzantine courtiers, and these networks needed a flow of reciprocal services, both symbolic and real.<sup>7</sup> Since

<sup>4</sup> N. Wilson, 'Books and Readers in Byzantium', in: *Byzantine Books and Bookmen. A Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium* (Washington DC 1975), 1–15, esp. 1–4.

<sup>5</sup> A. Viala, *Naissance de l'écrivain* (Paris 1985), 52–7.

<sup>6</sup> R. Weissman, 'Taking Patronage Seriously: Mediterranean Values and Renaissance Society', in: *Patronage, Art and Society in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford 1987), 25–46.

<sup>7</sup> About networks and services in personal friendships, see J. Boissevain, *Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulators and Coalitions* (Oxford 1974); for Byzantium, a powerful demonstration of networking in action is to be found in M. Mullett, *Theophylact of Ochrid. Reading the Letters of a Byzantine Archbishop* (Aldershot 1997).

friendships were often defined as intellectual friendships, as we have seen, poems had a certain value in this system.

It is clear that the emperor was the most important source of literary patronage (and patronage *tout court*). The texts that press for patronage are all addressed to emperors. The few commissions of poems we hear about are nearly all connected to the emperor. However, where poetry plays the role of dedicatory epigrams connected to an object, the picture changes, and all sorts of wealthy private individuals come into view.

This chapter first aims to reveal the representation of patronage, discussing the discourse used by our poets to convince successive patrons (especially emperors) to support the *logioi*. Thereafter, I will examine dedicatory epigrams connected to the funding of an object, building, or book, connecting their typical patterns and recurrent vocabulary with the habits of public ostentation of religious devotion. Finally, I will look more closely at the most powerful representation of patronage: the gift, relating this to the moral pressures on the discourse of patronage and the exclusivity of friendships within the elite.

### 8.1. SOLICITING PATRONAGE

Our *logioi* found themselves faced with the task of making their intellectual achievements profitable. One could describe their ‘project’ as an attempt to cash in on the renown and reputation they had acquired on an intellectual level. In other words: symbolical capital had to be converted into other forms of capital. But in order to attain this, they had to uphold the idea that support of *hoi logoi* was a natural thing, and necessary for an empire that deserved this name. A considerable amount of their energy thus went into the construction and defence of a certain discourse. I will define here ‘discourse’ as a coherent set of representations as communicated through texts. It forms part here of a subtle and long-term strategy to bring home the message that the pursuit of *hoi logoi* deserved remuneration of some kind. In their texts, our *logioi* sketch out a sort of ideal system of patronage, holding out responsibilities and advantages for the emperor as well as for themselves. It is this task of soliciting support that I will investigate here.



### 8.1.1. Imperial prestige

One of Psellos' *basilikoi logoi* in honour of Konstantinos IX Monomachos closes with a thinly veiled request for patronage. The fragment reveals some of the expectations that Psellos holds about the imperial policies towards *literati*.

*But how do things stand with us? We have been rejected, we have been disregarded—do not reproach me for saying so—we, the nurslings of knowledge, the practitioners of wisdom, the worshippers of the Muses. Someone else may hit an enemy with an arrow, or merely stretch out his spear, and the greatest honours are his. Another exhibits his gratitude towards you in appearance alone, and an abundant stream of riches inundates him. But we proclaim with words, we strike with eulogies, we serve with what means we have, and yet we do not receive a drop of mercy. Again I will tell you the same thing—excuse my boldness, emperor, it is the offspring of an aggrieved soul. How are the Romuli proclaimed, the Bruti, Aelii, Antiochi, Seleuci and Alexanders? In speeches, in written works, are they not? And those authors, what moved them to write? Was it not the profit they received?<sup>8</sup>*

Psellos clearly aims at tangible rewards. Just as did authors from the past, he and his colleagues should profit from imperial support. But competition is fierce. Psellos sneers at people who only praise the emperor in appearance; their praises are allegedly only part of display (*ἐνεδείξατο*). As we have observed above, 192–5, display and demonstration were viewed with suspicion. Psellos, conversely, promises irreproachable praise. Another frequent commonplace is that intellectuals have been unduly neglected, whereas others fare well. This unsatisfactory situation should be rectified by the emperor. The words *συγγράμματα* and *συγγράφοντες* refer specifically to written

<sup>8</sup> Psellos, *Or. pan.* 2.798–813: τὰ δ' ἡμέτερα οἶα; ἀπερρίμμεθα, καταπεφρονήμεθα, μὴ κακίης εἰ καὶ τοῦτο φήσω, οἱ τῆς γνώσεως τρόφιμοι, οἱ τῆς σοφίας ἐθάδες, οἱ τῶν μουσῶν θιασῶτα. ὁ μὲν τις βέλει τὸν ἐχθρὸν ἔπαισεν, ἢ μόνον τὸ δόρυ ἐπετείνατο καὶ τὰς πρώτας ἔχει τιμάς· ἄλλος τὸ εὐγνωμον μέχρι σχήματος ἐνεδείξατο, καὶ τὸ τοῦ πλοῦτου ρεῦμα τοῦτω ἔρρευσεν ἄφθονον. ἡμεῖς δὲ λόγοις κηρύττομεν, εὐφημίας βάλλομεν, οἷς ἔχομεν θεραπεύομεν, καὶ μόγις πού ρανίδα ἐλέους δεχόμεθα. ἀλλὰ πάλιν τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον ἐρώ, μὴ κάκιζε τὴν παρρησίαν, ὦ βασιλεῦ, τόκος ἐστὶν ὀδυνωμένης ψυχῆς. πόθεν Ῥωμῦλοι κηρύττονται, πόθεν Βροῦτοι καὶ Αἴλιοι, Ἀντίοχοι τε καὶ Σέλευκοι καὶ Ἀλέξανδροι; οὐκ ἐκ λόγων, οὐκ ἐκ συγγραμμάτων; οἱ δὲ συγγράφοντες πόθεν εἰς συγγραφὰς ἐκινήθησαν; οὐκ ἐξ ὧν εἰ ἔπασχον.

texts, singling out discursive practices as the target for imperial support, not just learning in general.

Psellos demonstrates the advantages of literature for a glorious reign. Monomachos has the opportunity to immortalize his own reign by being put on a par with eminent examples from the past. As is to be expected in an address to a Byzantine emperor, examples from the Roman past are particularly highlighted.<sup>9</sup> Monomachos' status obliges him to inscribe his reign in the succession of these magnificent rulers. The idea that literature can enhance imperial prestige by connecting it to ancient examples permeates the entire oration. Skilful writing has the power to arrest time, enabling great deeds to live on in the mind of the people. Konstantinos' brilliant successes deserve to be remembered in glorifying literature.

Psellos is at pains here to defend his own class of *logioi*. He singles out the intellectual elite as a separate class of people concerned with wisdom, knowledge, and arts, whereas other people, with their arrows and spears, belong to the military domain. There was a continuous struggle between various interest groups, each determined to protect its own interests.<sup>10</sup> Whereas most representations aimed at soliciting potential material support are vague and metaphorical, the request for rewards is quite outspoken in this case. Psellos also excuses himself for his frankness (*παρρησία*). He is no doubt at this moment still making his way in the hierarchy of the imperial state apparatus; he has to make his desires sufficiently clear.

Psellos is here not merely asking for patronage. He proposes a system of patronage of arts and knowledge. The class of people able to compose texts can guarantee that Monomachos' reign will be endowed with prestige, honoured by a connection with the glorious imperial past. But for this to happen, Monomachos must ensure that such a class of intellectuals is suitably supported.

There can be no doubt that emperors were sensible to the appeal to emulate their illustrious historical predecessors. Romanos III

<sup>9</sup> For the consciousness of the tradition of ancient Rome and the imperial grandeur that accompanied it, see also E. Kitlinger, 'Artistic Patronage in Early Byzantium', in: *Committenti e produzione artistico-letteraria nell'alto medioevo occidentale* (Spoleto 1992), 33–55, here 36–7; A. Markopoulos, 'Roman Antiquarianism: Aspects of the Roman Past in the Middle Byzantine Period (9th–11th centuries)', in: E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies. London 21–26 August 2006* (Aldershot 2006), I, 277–98, esp. 293–5.

<sup>10</sup> See also Psellos, *Ep. K-D* 37.

Argyros' reign (1028–34) in particular appears to have been influenced by the desire to accumulate prestige through emulation of the past. Perhaps not coincidentally, Romanos was the first of a series of emperors to come to the throne without a dynastic lineage. As a result, he was forced to search for other forms of symbolic capital to confirm his imperial status.

When Psellos discusses Romanos' cultural policies in his *Chronographia*, he attributes his aspirations to the desire to establish himself as a successor to glorious Roman emperors: 'Since Romanos wished to model his reign on those of the great Antonines of the past, the famous philosopher Marcus [Aurelius] and Augustus, he paid attention particularly to two things: the study of letters and the science of war.' To achieve the first goal, he 'enrolled every kind of philosopher, orators and everyone who occupied themselves with knowledge'.<sup>11</sup> The specific verb for the 'enrolment' of these intellectuals is *κατέλεγε*, a verb of which Psellos also uses the close cognate *ἐγκαταλέγω* to refer to enrolments in the army.<sup>12</sup> This suggests that the main reward for these intellectuals consisted in promotion to an official function.

A similar characterization of Romanos' aspirations appears in Psellos' short historical survey of eleventh-century emperors in his second panegyric oration (which has been discussed above). Here too, Romanos is represented as a ruler interested in literature and education. When he ascended the imperial throne, says Psellos, he 'concerned himself even more with his dignity, and more eagerly than before devoted himself to literature (*logos*) and occupied himself with "philosophy"'.<sup>13</sup> Psellos suggests that Romanos' primary motivation has to be sought in the dignity connected with his imperial status (*ἀξιώματι*): rather than genuine interest, the prestigious appearance of a cultivated reign mattered for him. Romanos must have set in motion a new imperial interest for learning and culture, out of motivations clearly connected with the prestige of an empire with a glorious past.

<sup>11</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book III, § 2: *βουλόμενος δὲ ἐς τοὺς ἀρχαίους Ἀντωνίνους ἐκείνους, τὸν τε φιλοσοφώτατον Μάρκον καὶ τὸν Σεβαστόν, ἀπεικάσαι τὴν ἑαυτοῦ βασιλείαν, δυοῖν τούτων ἀντίχετο, τῆς τε περὶ τοὺς λόγους σπουδῆς καὶ τῆς περὶ τὰ ὄπλα φροντίδος. (. . .) πᾶν γένος κατέλεγε, φιλοσόφους φημί καὶ ῥήτορας καὶ τοὺς ὅσοι περὶ τὰ μαθήματα ἐσπουδάκασιν.*

<sup>12</sup> Cf. e.g. Psellos, *Chronographia*, book III, § 7, l. 13.

<sup>13</sup> Psellos, *Or. pan.* 2.203–5: *ἔτι καὶ μᾶλλον συνεπεδίδου τῷ ἀξιώματι, καὶ πλέον ἢ πρότερον λόγου τε ἤπτετο καὶ φιλοσοφίας ἐπεμελείτο.*

A great ancient model for these emperors is Marcus Aurelius, the philosopher among emperors.<sup>14</sup> In some panegyric orations that Psellos addressed to emperors, Marcus is presented as an ideal emperor who should be imitated.<sup>15</sup> The model was successful: in his funeral oration for Xiphilinos, Psellos reports that Monomachos, having heard about this learned emperor, was encouraged to take lessons from Psellos, even placing Psellos on the throne while noting down what he dictated.<sup>16</sup>

Another recurrent motif is that of the emperor as the restorer of learning.<sup>17</sup> Psellos attributes this role to Michael Doukas in a *basilikos logos* (*Or. pan.* 8). In earlier days, emperors paid attention only to tax gatherers, while learning and intellectuals were neglected; now wisdom itself lives in the soul of the new emperor, and he prefers contact with learned people to the adoration of the subjects of his mighty empire.

Psellos' *Historia Syntomos*,<sup>18</sup> which is clearly intended to be a kind of *Fürstenspiegel*,<sup>19</sup> also transmits the image of the ideal emperor who welcomes and supports learning.<sup>20</sup> For example, Justinian is praised because he gathered learned men around him.<sup>21</sup> Conversely, when Staurakios is debunked as one of the worst emperors possible, his neglect of learning is counted among his faults.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>14</sup> See also M. Angold, 'Imperial Renewal and Orthodox Reaction: Byzantium in the Eleventh Century', in: P. Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines. The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th–13th Centuries. Papers from the Twenty-sixth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies* (Aldershot 1994), 231–46, esp. 235.

<sup>15</sup> Psellos, *Or. pan.* 6.316–18.

<sup>16</sup> Psellos, *Or. fun. in Xiph.* 434.19–24.

<sup>17</sup> N. Radošević, 'The Emperor as the Patron of Learning in Byzantine *Basilikoi Logoi*', in: J. S. Langdon, S. Reinert, J. Stajonevich Allen, and C. P. Ioannides (eds), *Tò 'Ελληνικόν. Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis, Jr* (New Rochelle 1993), I, 267–87, at 271–2.

<sup>18</sup> Nowadays generally believed to be a genuine work of Psellos, see J. Duffy and S. Papaioannou, 'Michael Psellos and the Authorship of the *Historia Syntomos*. Final Considerations', in: E. Chrysos, A. Avramea, and A. Laiou (eds), *Βυζάντιο. Κράτος και κοινωνία* (Athens 2003), 219–29.

<sup>19</sup> For the exemplary aspect of the *Historia Syntomos*, see also J. Ljubarskij, 'Some Notes on the Newly Discovered Historical Work by Psellos', in: Langdon e.a. (eds), *Tò 'Ελληνικόν*, I, 213–28, esp. 214. Ljubarskij suggests Michael VII as the addressee of the work.

<sup>20</sup> Ljubarskij, 'Some Notes', 217–19; Duffy and Papaioannou, 'Final Considerations', 228.

<sup>21</sup> Michael Psellos, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. W. Aerts (Berlin 1990), §71, l. 70–1.

<sup>22</sup> Psellos, *Historia Syntomos*, §93, l. 89–90.

The thinly veiled pressure Psellos exerts on the emperors has to be contrasted with the rhetoric of Mauropous. Mauropous does not press for patronage, but he does propagate an ideology that is favourable to his own class. Lefort has given an outline of the imperial ideology Mauropous advanced in his orations.<sup>23</sup> Mauropous repeatedly projects the ideal of an emperor who rules according to the application of laws and the powers of persuasion, rather than through force of arms. Pacifism, clemency, and cultivation are the key concepts in this imperial ideal. Words (*λόγοι*) are represented as powerful arms in defence of the empire. Herein the emperor imitates God, who has predestined that the world should be ruled by persuasion and reason (*πειθοῖ καὶ λόγῳ*).<sup>24</sup> The eloquence of the emperor embodies his culture, in contrast to the military prowess of his barbarian adversaries.<sup>25</sup> These ideals, of course, conformed well to the interests of the civil class, and need to be seen in the same light as Psellos' demand, in the panegyric fragment translated above, to favour this class instead of the military aristocracy. It may by now be clear that both Psellos and Mauropous used the *basilikos logos* as an ideal opportunity to cast the emperor in his role as patron of learning, carving out space for rewards intended for people of their own class.<sup>26</sup>

In Christophoros' poems we can detect subtle pressure on the emperor to live up to ideals favourable to a smoothly functioning patronage system. Poem 19, in dactylic hexameters, is addressed to the emperor Michael IV. It looks like a very conventional short encomium in verse, but it has its own peculiar emphasis. By means of a *priamel*, the poet tells us that other emperors were preoccupied with war (v. 1), horse races (v. 2), or learning and literature (v. 3). The prime concern of Michael, in contrast, is said to be *ἐλεημοσύνη* (vv. 4–7):

σοὶ δ' ἐλεημοσύνη τιμᾶται ἔξοχα πάντων·  
 μιλιχίη γὰρ ἅπαντα βρότεια γένη ἑλαίρεις·  
 οὓς ὀλοῆς πενίης δὲ βέλος δάμασεν πολύπικρον,  
 τοῖσιν ἄφαρ παρέχεις ἄλκαρ, σκηπτοῦχε, ἀρήγων.

<sup>23</sup> J. Lefort, 'Rhétorique et politique: trois discours de Jean Mauropous en 1047', *TM* 6 (1976), 265–303.

<sup>24</sup> Mauropous, *Or.* 186, §8.

<sup>25</sup> Mauropous, *Or.* 186, §10.

<sup>26</sup> For this aspect of *basilikoi logoi* in general in Byzantium, see Radošević, 'Emperor as Patron'.

*You, by contrast, venerate mercy most of all,  
because, by virtue of your kindness, you pity all mortal people.  
And those who are smitten by the bitter arrow of baneful poverty,  
these you provide a helping hand, sceptre bearer, by relieving them.*

The word *ἐλεημοσύνη* is completely out of tune with the otherwise epic-sounding vocabulary. It is otherwise almost exclusively used in Christian contexts, and often has the stricter sense of ‘almsgiving’, charity out of pity for the poor.<sup>27</sup> Instead of martial or cultural achievements, Christophoros advances largesse as the principal imperial virtue. The poem, which continues with a curse for those who do not love the emperor, and closes with a wish for a long reign, can thus be considered an implicit request for largesse, although *hoi logoi* are not singled out here as a target for patronage.

The question of imperial patronage must be separated from the question of whether these emperors had themselves personal cultural interests. It may be revealing to remember that Michael VII was apparently exceptional in receiving an education in letters, and that, even then, his verses were apparently not up to the normal standard.<sup>28</sup> Psellos pokes fun at the *sebaste* Maria Skleraina because she managed to pronounce one Homeric word correctly.<sup>29</sup> The greatest intellectual achievement praised by our poets seems to be Monomachos’ edition of *schede*.<sup>30</sup> We should be cautious, then, in regarding cultural policies as something prepared in the palace and carried out by orators; rather, the orators themselves deliberately tried to impress upon the emperors their idea of what literature could do for emperors, and how. It is, I would suggest, in the happy coincidence of people issuing from a class without privilege but profiting from vertical mobility on the one hand, and emperors in need of prestige to compensate for their shaky dynastic status on the other hand, that the support for learning and literature in the period 1025–81 finds its basis.

The rather blissful situation for patronage of literature in these decades may be contrasted with literary patronage under Basileios II. The genres in which the rest of the century excels—imperial rhetoric, historiography, poetry, and the like—are virtually absent in

<sup>27</sup> G. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 19th edn (Oxford 2005), s.v. *ἐλεημοσύνη*.

<sup>28</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VIIc, §4. See also above, 216–17.

<sup>29</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VI, §61. <sup>30</sup> See above, 264–5.

the years 1000 to 1028.<sup>31</sup> This is confirmed by Psellos' assessment: he writes that there were many intellectuals, but they were not supported by the emperor.<sup>32</sup> Crostini, however, has called into question Psellos' statements, and has tried to rehabilitate literary culture under Basileios.<sup>33</sup> Certainly, Basileios' reign witnessed the ambitious project of collecting and rephrasing the lives of saints, a project connected with the person of Symeon Metaphrastes. Other authors and poets, notably Ioannes Geometres, were also active during Basileios' reign. But their literary activities are disconnected from imperial patronage. As Lauxtermann emphasizes, Basileios seems, for one reason or another, not to have been interested in the patronage of literature.<sup>34</sup>

This becomes particularly clear when, at a certain point, Basileios interrupted the metaphrastic project—according to one source, after reading a passage that impinged too much upon imperial authority for his liking. Symeon fell into disgrace, and the metaphrastic menologium only began to have its great impact after Basileios' death.<sup>35</sup> Ioannes Geometres seems to have suffered a similar fall from imperial favour.<sup>36</sup>

Everything seems to accord with Psellos' account: the emperor was not interested in supporting literati, and in a later phase of his reign did away with them altogether. The lack of imperial patronage during the latter part of Basileios' reign (and during the brief reign of Konstantinos VIII) seriously hampered the production of courtly, rhetorically styled poetry. The splendid projections of imperial prestige through literature did not catch on with Basileios.

One could also make a comparison with literary patronage after 1081. The period directly after the heyday of our poets, the reign of Alexios Komnenos, proved to be a difficult time for *logioi*. The new generation of intellectuals could not impose its will so easily on the new regime. Significantly, one of the most important authors of this

<sup>31</sup> This is also concluded by M. Lauxtermann, 'Byzantine Poetry and the Paradox of Basil II's Reign', in: P. Magdalino (ed.), *Byzantium in the Year 1000* (Leiden/Boston/Cologne 2003), 199–216, here at 213–16.

<sup>32</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book I, §29.

<sup>33</sup> B. Crostini, 'The Emperor Basil II's Cultural Life', *Byz* 66 (1996), 55–80.

<sup>34</sup> Lauxtermann, 'Paradox'.

<sup>35</sup> C. Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes. Rewriting and Canonization* (Copenhagen 2002), 93–110 and 128–9.

<sup>36</sup> M. Lauxtermann, 'John Geometres—Poet and Soldier', *Byz* 68 (1998), 356–80, esp. 367–71; E. van Opstall, *Jean Géomètre. Poèmes en hexamètres et en distiques élégiaques* (Leiden 2008), 10–11.

period, Theophylaktos of Ochrid, was cut off from the capital for most of his life. Alexios' reign seems in this respect to constitute a period of formation and transition. The complaints and laments of poor intellectuals in the twelfth century may be partly the result of a 'gold rush' effect:<sup>37</sup> the blissful circumstances of literary patronage in the mid-eleventh century spawned numerous contenders who had to face more difficult conditions. Intellectuals now emerged as a 'professional stratum',<sup>38</sup> but they did not occupy the same privileged status based on a conception of *hoi logoi* as a sacrosanct ideal.

One of the most conspicuous themes relating to patronage of poetry in the twelfth century is the 'rhetoric of poverty',<sup>39</sup> evident in its most extreme form, the *Betteldichtung*. Poets refer in this discourse to their extreme poverty, cursing *hoi logoi* as a woefully inadequate means of making a living. Although traces of such a discourse are not altogether absent in eleventh-century poetry, as we will see, our poets never assumed such a desperate stance. The quest for patronage in the eleventh century is a gentle, long-term ideological strategy, rather than a series of pressing personal laments.

The conditions for literary patronage before 1025 and after 1081 bring out all the more the contrast with the favourable, if unstable, circumstances for intellectuals that prevailed in the years between. Even if our intellectuals did not succeed in establishing a permanent patronage system with fixed positions and secure rewards, they did succeed in establishing the idea that *hoi logoi* were an important component of a glorious imperial reign.

### 8.1.2. The special charms of poetry: Psellos 18

What role does poetry play in this broader discourse of patronage for *hoi logoi*? Answering this question is made more difficult by the fact, discussed in Chapter 2, that poetry is rarely mentioned separately as a type of text distinct from prose.

<sup>37</sup> R. Beaton, 'The Rhetoric of Poverty: The Lives and Opinions of Theodore Prodromos', *BMGS* 11 (1987), 5.

<sup>38</sup> A. Kazhdan and A. Wharton Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture from the Eleventh to the Twelfth Centuries* (Berkeley 1985), 130–1.

<sup>39</sup> Beaton, 'Poverty', 1–28; P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel Komnenos. 1143–1180* (Cambridge 1993), 336–42.



In many texts, mention of poetry in the context of patronage does not carry much useful information. In Psellos' sixth *basilikos logos* for Konstantinos Monomachos, in a flattering comparison, it is said that Alexander the Great is proclaimed and exalted both in prose and in poems.<sup>40</sup> Poetry is specified here as a vehicle for praise, but not in any particular contrast to prose, and, significantly, only in the context of a distant past. Something similar can be said about the passage in the second panegyric oration depicting the present dearth of orators and poets capable of describing Monomachos' deeds.<sup>41</sup> Poetry is apparently only mentioned to complete the picture of possible literary forms.

The situation is different in Psellos' poem 18. This poem is one of the rare texts in which one of our *logioi* clearly singles out verse as a form of text that can have its own advantages for the patron who supports it (see also above, 52–3). The poem is dedicated to Isaakios Komnenos. Westerink classified it under the *didactica minora*, since the majority of the poem explains the names of the ides, nones, and kalendae. This didactic explanation is triggered by the occasion of the poem: the *καλάνδαι*, a yearly feast in Constantinople.<sup>42</sup> Notwithstanding its didactic traits, the poem in fact follows a rhetorical pattern: it is perfectly akin to a *kletikos logos* as described by Menander Rhetor.<sup>43</sup> The only difference is that our poem attaches particular importance to the aetiology of the feast, one of the fixed elements of a *kletikos logos*. Thus, after the explanation of the Roman calendar system, the poem indulges in lavish praise of Isaakios. The ides and nones are no longer of importance, since Constantinople now only recognizes the calends (vv. 38–9). In this city the crowds have now gathered to acclaim the emperor (vv. 40–3). In the remainder of the poem, Psellos describes his role and that of his fellow *logioi* in this happy feast in honour of the emperor. In doing this, the poem also comments upon its own function and place in these celebrations (vv. 44–58):<sup>44</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Psellos, *Or. pan.* 6.295–6: Ἀλέξανδρον τὸν Μακεδόνα ἕδουσι μὲν συγγραφέων λόγοι, βοῶσι δὲ ποιητῶν γένη.

<sup>41</sup> Psellos, *Or. pan.* 2.27–30.

<sup>42</sup> A. M. Guglielmino, 'Versi di Michele Psello all'imperatore, signore Isacco Comneno, sulle calende, le none e le idi', *SicGymn* 27 (1974), 121–33, esp. 121–2; for the *kalandai*, see *ODB*, s.v. 'calends'.

<sup>43</sup> Menander Rhetor, *Peri epideiktikon*, ed. D. A. Russell and N. G. Wilson (Oxford 1981), 182–92.

<sup>44</sup> At v. 50, Westerink has *χαίροντας*, which is likely a typographical error; compare Guglielmino, 'Versi', *ad locum*.

Ὅθεν καὶ γὼ σοι τὰς καλάνδας εἰσάγω  
 καὶ μέτρα ποιῶ τοὺς ἐτησίους ὕμνους, 45  
 εὐάγγελός σοι προσφόρος δεδειγμένος.  
 χαίρε, στρατηγὲ καὶ βασιλεὺ γῆς ὅλης,  
 μέγιστε, παμβόητε, τοῦ κράτους κράτος·  
 τοὺς σοὺς γὰρ ὑμνήσουσιν εὐήχους ἄθλους  
 οὐ παιδιαῖς χαίροντες ἄνδρες ἀθρόοι, 50  
 οἱ τοῖς λόγοις δὲ μουσικῶς τετραμμένοι  
 καὶ πάντα ῥυθμίζοντες εὐρύθμοι μέτροις.  
 χαίρε στρατηγὲ (τοῦτο γὰρ πάλιν φράσω)  
 ἀκινδύνου φάλαγγος εὖ τεταγμένης,  
 θέαμα φρικτὸν βαρβάρους τοῖς ἀθέοις. 55  
 σῶν γὰρ τροπαίων πᾶσαν ἐμπλήσεις χθόνα,  
 καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα σοὺς ἀνυμνήσει πόνους  
 μέτροις τε ποικίλλουσα καὶ λόγοις ἄμα.

*Therefore, I introduce the calends to you  
 and I shape my yearly hymns in a metrical form, 45  
 showing myself fittingly as a bringer of a joyful message to you.  
 Hail, general and emperor of the whole earth,  
 greatest, most renowned, power of all powers!  
 Your resounding feats will not be sung  
 by an assembly of men who indulge in trifles, 50  
 but by men who have enjoyed a refined education  
 and give rhythm to everything with their well proportioned metres.  
 Hail general—to use that name again—  
 of a well-arranged phalanx which is harmless,  
 a terrifying sight for the unbelieving barbarians. 55  
 You will fill the whole earth with your trophies,  
 and every tongue will sing in praise of your deeds,  
 embellishing them with poetry and prose alike.*

In these verses, the image of a triumphal feast is made complete by the praise that Isaakios' admiring subjects will lavish on their emperor. Psellos describes this praise three times, and each time poetry is part of the acclamation. First, Psellos himself states that the eulogy he now presents to the emperor adds to the joyfulness of the message. The fact that it is composed in verse is consciously singled out (v. 45: μέτρα ποιῶ). Then, after an imperial address that can count as a foretaste of such metrical praises (vv. 47–8), Psellos announces that a select group of cultivated men will also present their praises. Again,

he specifies that they will do so in poetry (see 52: *μέτροις*), placing great emphasis on the rhythmical qualities of such poetic praise. This seems to be part of their refined cultivation, as they are ‘educated in the arts of Muses’, which strikes a chord with the musical qualities their poetry is said to contain. Again, beginning with *χαίρει*, an example of such praise is given. Finally, Psellos promises that ‘every tongue’ will sing in praise of the emperor. As we have seen in section 2.3, poetry plays a role here alongside prose. There is a marked progressive climax in this enumeration, from one person (Psellos himself) to the *logioi*, and finally the entire populace.

Psellos advances several qualities poetry has to offer. The first is the fact that the poetic explanation of the calendar turns this address into a joyful message. Poetry transmits knowledge in an agreeable fashion, a feature that reminds us of the *charis* (charm) that verse form brings to a didactic message. Secondly, poetry is a sign of refinement, of cultivated education. Thanks to their education in the Muses’ arts, the more refined men will be able to sing eurhythmic praises. The third quality of poetry, as it appears from the final verse, is *poikilia* (versatility, or variation). Isaakios’ deeds will be sung exhaustively in every form accessible to the *logioi*, and these forms also encompass poetry.

Psellos’ job of attracting patronage is complicated here by the fact that Isaakios, unlike the previous emperors, issued from the class of military aristocrats. It is well known that Isaakios consciously shaped his imperial image in a more military fashion.<sup>45</sup> Psellos resolves this tension by retaining Isaakios’ military reputation: he calls him a *στρατηγός* and especially praises his military achievements. At the same time, he integrates this element seamlessly into the model of the cultivated emperor. Military achievements can gain renown by being the subject of poetry and rhetoric. Isaakios’ victories are themselves ‘resonating’ (v. 49: *εὔηχος*), and thus deserve praises that are equally sonorous.

At the same time, it is implied that the intellectual elite itself is a weapon in the hands of Isaakios. They are called a ‘well ordered phalanx’ (v. 54) that contains no danger (*ἀκίνδυνος*). Does Psellos mean to say that the elite submits itself to the emperor, that he has

<sup>45</sup> Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change*, 120–4; A. Kazhdan, ‘The Aristocracy and the Imperial Ideal’, in: M. Angold (ed.), *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries* (Oxford 1984), 53–74.

nothing to fear from them? In any case, this phalanx has the power to ward off the barbarians, and thus fits with Isaakios' military ideology. Isaakios can distinguish himself from these barbarians by upholding culture and lending a benevolent ear to his subjects who sing his praises.

## 8.2. COMMISSIONS

Where in our poems can we see patronage directly at work? Which poems are written as the result of a direct commission from a patron? At the beginning of this chapter, I outlined the difficulties that surround this question. In the first place, there is a deliberate reticence on this subject. In the second, the initiative was held not so much by the patrons as by the poets themselves, as we will see in the following sections.

Only very rarely are we informed about payments for writings. Mauropus' letter 33 is a revealing exception. This curious letter is sent to someone who is initially called *Χρυσορρόας*. This addressee was no doubt also active as an author (see l. 14: *ταῖς γραφαῖς σου*), but I am reluctant to accept Karpozilos' identification with Psellos.<sup>46</sup> The letter is far from clear, but it seems certain that Mauropus had sent a draft (l. 10: *σκεμμάτιον*) of a discourse imitating the style of his correspondent, with the intention that it should then be passed off as a work of this other person. For this piece of ghost-writing, Mauropus requests a payment (v. 16: *νομίσματα*), which must be sufficiently ample, since the creation of the work, metaphorically described as a delivery of a child, has cost him much labour. As far as I can see, this is one of the most explicit accounts of financial remuneration for the creation of a text. This payment is even (ideally) in proportion to the length of the text. The writer emerges here as a craftsman to be paid for his work.

<sup>46</sup> A. Karpozilos, *The Letters of Ioannes Mauropus Metropolitan of Euchaita* (Thessaloniki 1990), 227–8 suggests that Psellos, *Ep. KD 33* was a letter in response to this letter, adducing some similar metaphors in both letters. However, these metaphors are quite conventional, and Psellos hints at the death of Mauropus' brother, which is not mentioned at all in Mauropus' letter. See also A. Kazhdan, 'Some Problems in the Biography of John Mauropus', *JÖB* 43 (1993), 87–111, at 104.

There are other indications of commission of texts, but none of these refers to a payment or remuneration of any kind. The clearest indication of such a commission is to be found, in some manuscripts, in the title of Psellos 6. As we have seen, this information pertains to a range of poems. It states that Psellos had written a poetic overview of all sciences for Michael VII, at the order (*ἐκ προστάξεως*) of Michael's father. A similar formulation is to be found in the title above poem 8, the *synopsis legum*. Poem 2 on the Song of Songs also explicitly states that it is written at the behest of the emperor (v. 4: *θέσπισμα*, vv. 1202 and 1215: *ἐπίταγμα*). In the epilogue to this poem, Psellos, moreover, asserts that he has executed this command as 'slave of the emperor's power' (v. 1216: *ὡς δούλοι τοῦ σου κράτους*).

Can we trust these assertions? As we have argued above (245–8), Psellos may have had his own motives for emphasizing that these poems were a direct commission on the part of the emperor, motives related to the low reputation of the *politikos stichos*. And then there is the additional problem of the different dedications. Poem 2, for example, was dedicated by Psellos to three different emperors subsequently (see above, 247). It is difficult to imagine that each of these three emperors would have made the same explicit request for a summary of the Song of Songs. Rather, if we suppose that Psellos submitted exactly the same version of the poem to different emperors, the 'commission' which Psellos refers to is a commission that is in fact enforced upon the patron. This ploy helps to portray the emperor as a pious person interested in theology. It may be concluded that the discourse of patronage as it is presented in the poems is at some remove from the reality of patronage behind it.

Apart from these references to the commissioning of didactic poems, it would be a reasonable assumption that epigrams should be thought of as the outcome of a concrete commission on the part of a patron. If a wealthy person were to call upon an artist to produce an object, he would presumably also engage a poet to produce a fitting epigram. The vast epigrammatic production, conserved both in inscriptions and in the collections of epigrams in manuscripts, would suggest that this course of action was widespread.

But how did this work in practice? Did there exist poetic craftsmen who wrote verses to commission? This possibility seems to be confirmed by some cases. A clear indication is the curious series of eight epigrams on a cup made for Konstantinos Dalassenos, transmitted in *Athous Laura* Ω 126. Dalassenos was a wealthy scion of a powerful

family.<sup>47</sup> All these short poems are extremely similar to each other. It has been suggested as an explanation that the poet wrote several poems, from which the patron could then choose his preferred option.<sup>48</sup> It may or may not be a coincidence that there is a series of five epigrams transmitted under the name of Psellos, on another cup of silver (poem 34).<sup>49</sup> This cup is offered to a woman. These short poems (one or two verses) are very similar: it would be absurd to think that they were all inscribed on the same cup. Rather, the poet offered several pieces to the patroness, from which she could select one.

When searching for evidence for commissioned poetry, we may also make the connection with great patronage projects that would involve poetry. The foundation of Konstantinos Monomachos at Mangana, dedicated to St George, is a significant example. From contemporary sources, we know that Monomachos attached particular importance to this foundation, and Psellos mentions with a note of reproach that the emperor exhausted the treasury in order to realize his pet project.<sup>50</sup>

No historiographer mentions that these funds also involved a commission of epigrams to accompany the project. Yet the poetic production related to the foundation of Mangana is considerable. Christophoros 95 and an anonymous poem in *Athen.* 1040,<sup>51</sup> as their lemmata indicate, are both written on the subject of the church of St George at Mangana. A poem in *Marc. gr.* 524 celebrates the *triklinos* of Monomachos at Mangana.<sup>52</sup> Mauropous 71 and 72, in

<sup>47</sup> J.-C. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963–1210)* (Paris 1990), 38–41.

<sup>48</sup> See H. Maguire, *Image and Imagination: The Byzantine Epigram as Evidence for Viewer Response* (Toronto 1996), 8–9 and Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 42–3. See also above, 120.

<sup>49</sup> Z. Farkas, 'Epigrammata Pselli', *Acta Antiqua* 50 (2010), 97–102, argues that these epigrams constitute one poem.

<sup>50</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, book VI, §185 and Michael Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. and trans. I. Pérez Martín, *Miguel Ataleiates. Historia* (Madrid 2002), 36.

<sup>51</sup> I. Sakkelion and A. I. Sakkelion, *Κατάλογος τῶν χειρογράφων τῆς Ἑθνικῆς Βιβλιοθήκης τῆς Ἑλλάδος* (Athens 1892), 184–5.

<sup>52</sup> For the incipit, see S. Lambros, 'Ὁ Μαρκανὸς κῶδιξ 524', *NE* 8 (1911), 3–59; 123–92, here at 6. The poem will be edited in F. Spingou, 'Snapshots from the Eleventh Century: The Longobards from Bari, a Chartouliarios from Petra, and the Complex of Mangana' (forthcoming). I thank Foteini Spingou for providing me with a provisional text of her edition of the poem.

turn, are written on a liturgical book for the service of Saint George, no doubt related to this foundation. Perhaps we should add to this Psellos 31, written for Saint George, but without mention of any specific foundation.<sup>53</sup>

Christophoros 95 is above all laudatory in tone. The argument goes that George is the foremost martyr as to the honours conferred on him here on earth, so beautiful is his church. The poem ends with a smart twist on a famous biblical quote (Genesis 28.17). The poem refers to ‘this place here’ (v. 10: *πλήρες ὄδε χαρίτων τὸ χωρίον*), which suggests it may have been part of the original building. But what speaks against an inscriptional use is the absence of any dedication or any mention of the name of the patron. It is possible that it was an elegant gift, meant to please the emperor.

Compared with Christophoros 95, the anonymous poem in the Athens manuscript displays more conventional ‘epigrammatic’ features. It starts with a very similar conceit: everyone entering ‘here’ will be astounded at seeing the beauty and the light of this church. The adverb *ἐνθάδε* (v. 5) suggests that this epigram is inscribed on the building itself. The epigram especially praises the play of light created by the church and its dome. The greatest part of the poem, however, is reserved for the patron: Konstantinos Monomachos has restored this church ‘out of a burning desire’ (v. 10: *ἐκ πόθου ζέοντος*). In an echo of the first part of the poem, he is called ‘the sun’ (v. 12) and ‘the light of purple’ (v. 14). In line with a metaphor that was widespread at the time, the empress Zoe is equated with the moon (v. 17). The epigram mentions explicitly that this restoration has been carried out ‘for the glory and the boast of his reign’ (v. 22: *εἰς δόξαν, εἰς καύχημα τῆς σκηπτουχίας*). The poem closes with an elaborate prayer to Christ to grant protection and glory to the emperors, through the mediation of the Theotokos and Saint George. This epigram corresponds to the traditional scheme of dedication: the object at hand is beautiful, but it is first and foremost produced by *pothos*, by a patron identified at length, who at the end asks for a reward.

The poem in the *Marcianus* on the *triklinos* of Monomachos also displays features of an inscription. Twice, the poem refers to

<sup>53</sup> Westerink also makes the connection with Monomachos’ foundation: see Westerink, *Poemata*, 297. Whether the poem is really a work of Psellos is highly dubious.

the *triklinos* as being 'here' (v. 2: ἐνταῦθα; v. 5: ὦδε). Just as in Christophoros' poem, the motif is present that Monomachos' marvellous foundation 'defeats' every attempt to blame it.

Mauropous 71 and 72 are conventional dedicatory epigrams. The hypothesis that they were written to commission gains credibility when we observe that the poet does not speak in his own name: instead, the first-person narrator is identified with the emperor himself. The two poems are very similar in length (both seven verses), content, and structure. Poem 71 runs like this:

*Εἰς τὸ βιβλίον τῆς διακονίας τοῦ τροπαιοφόρου*  
*Πιστὸς βασιλεύς, εὐσεβὴς αὐτοκράτωρ,*  
*σεβαστὸς ὀρθόδοξος ὁ Μονομάχος·*  
*τὸ πρὸς σέ φίλτρον οἶον ἐν ψυχῇ φέρω,*  
*ἔργοις ἔδειξα, λαμπρὲ τροπαιοφόρε,*  
*ἅπαντα ταῦτα σὴν ἀπαρτίσας χάριν* 5  
*ὧν ἡ γραφὴ δείκνυσιν αὕτη τοὺς τύπους,*  
*ἐμοὶ πρὸ πάντων μαρτυροῦσα τὸν πόθον*  
*ἔπειτα ταῖς σαῖς πανσεβάστοις Ἀγούσταις.*

*On the book of service for the victorious martyr*  
*I, faithful king and pious emperor,*  
*the revered and orthodox Monomachos,*  
*have shown the love such as I hold it for you in my soul*  
*through my deeds, radiant trophy bearer,*  
*and I have, for your sake, completed all this,* 5  
*of which the imprints are shown by this very book,*  
*bearing witness to my desire before all,*  
*and in addition that of your most reverend Augustae.*

The poem goes to great lengths to underline Monomachos' attachment to his personal saint. At the same time, the making of this book reflects the *pothos*, desire, with which Monomachos makes his dedication: it is a sign of his most intimate feelings, as the poem emphasizes. In 72.4, Monomachos says that contributing to George's glory has also brought great pleasure to him. These two dedicatory epigrams thus primarily serve to underpin the sincere motivations of the patron in undertaking this project. Poem 72 also closes with an explicit wish for a remuneration: it is hoped that the saint will reward (v. 7: ἀντίδος) the emperor with a celestial reign.

In these two poems, as in many others that are written for imperial foundations, Mauropous does no more than flesh out an established



pattern with conventional poetic formulae. At the same time, he carefully respects the wishes of his imperial patron, by providing space for his personal attachment to St George. These are, I would presume by this indirect evidence, poems made to commission, just like so many others in this period.

Apart from the foundation for Mangana, there are several other extant epigrams connected with foundations of Konstantinos Monomachos. Expenditures by this emperor on icons and reliquaries are celebrated in epigrams transmitted in *Marc. gr.* 524.<sup>54</sup> Poem 2 from this collection is an epigram on an icon made by ‘Longibards’ (Italians) for Monomachos, and poems 10 and 11 are epigrams on an icon made in honour of the Theotokos by Monomachos. Monomachos’ *flamoulon* (military banner), featuring his patron saint, also sported an epigram ascribed to Psellos (poem 27).

Foundations of Monomachos also have a prominent place in Mauropous’ poetry collection. Poems 57, 58, 70, together with the already mentioned 71 and 72, are epigrams on books and icons dedicated by this emperor. Poems 73 and 74 are made for an icon in honour of the Archangel Michael, dedicated by the empress Theodora. Poems 75 to 79 accompany the depiction of a *deesis*, encompassing the emperor himself, kneeling before Christ, with the Theotokos and Prodnomos acting as mediators. Just as in poems 71 and 72 (where Monomachos is unmistakably the subject), the first-person narrator in these poems is the emperor, as indicated in the lemma above 75 (*ὡς ἐκ τοῦ βασιλέως*). Poems 81 to 85 are a series of funeral poems for the grave of Monomachos. These too are conventional rhetorical pieces, closing each time with a wish for reward in heaven.<sup>55</sup> Although there is no other evidence than the poems themselves, it is not far-fetched to state that during Monomachos’ reign, Mauropous served as a court epigrammatist, asked to provide fitting epigrams for various imperial foundations, just as he was asked to provide the public orations for important occasions.

<sup>54</sup> Lambros, *Μαρκιανὸς κῶδιξ*, 5–7. See now Spingou, ‘Snapshots’.

<sup>55</sup> A. Kazhdan, ‘Some Problems in the Biography of John Mauropous, II’, *Byz* 65 (1995), 362–87, at 370–1 suggested that these poems were unusually critical for the emperor, and could hence not have been written for Monomachos. But compunction in the first person is a very usual feature of these epigrams.

## 8.3. DEDICATIONS

The genre of the dedicatory epigram is ancient: its history stretches back to the oldest remnants of the Greek language.<sup>56</sup> Essentially, in a dedicatory epigram, an individual declares that he has funded an object in honour of a divinity. The epigram often involves praise of the dedicatee, and states the motivations of the donor. Beyond this core structure, there are many other factors that influence the composition and vocabulary of Byzantine dedicatory epigrams. These include the Christian conception of ownership, specific cultural and religious practices such as the entry of wealthy aristocrats into monasteries, the relationship between emperors and patron saints, etc. Comparing several dedicatory inscriptions, Andreas Rhoby deduced a recurring pattern: justification of the foundation, presentation of the patron, and a plea for deliverance from committed sins, often connected with a prayer for redemption on the Day of Judgement.<sup>57</sup> There is much to be gained from a finer understanding of the vocabulary and the specific rhetoric of dedicatory epigrams.<sup>58</sup> Although often overlooked in favour of the images or objects they accompany, they can teach us much about patronage of art and literature, the circulation of objects, and the material and cultural aspects of monastic and aristocratic life.

Let us begin with dedication in public places in Constantinople. In the early nineteenth century, some traces of an inscription were still visible in the apse of Hagia Sophia. The epigram is also known to us via some manuscripts that make mention of it. The poem, in elegiac distichs, runs as follows:<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> See now J. W. Day, *Archaic Greek Epigram and Dedication: Representation and Reperformance* (Cambridge/New York 2010).

<sup>57</sup> A. Rhoby, 'The Structure of Inscriptional Dedicatory Epigrams in Byzantium', in: C. B. De Lorenzi and M. De Gaetano (eds), *La poesia tardoantica e medievale. Atti del IV Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Perugia, 15-17 novembre 2007* (Alessandria 2010), 309-32, here at 316.

<sup>58</sup> See also W. Hörandner, 'Zur Topik byzantinischer Widmungs- und Einleitungs-gedichte', in: V. Panagl (ed.), *Dulce Melos. La poesia tardo antica e medievale. Atti del III Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Vienna, 15-18 novembre 2004* (Alessandria 2007), 319-35.

<sup>59</sup> S. G. Mercati, 'Sulle iscrizioni di Santa Sofia', in: *Collectanea Byzantina*, II, 276-95, here at 293, and A. Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Fresken und Mosaiken* (Vienna 2009), 401 (nr. M14).

Καὶ τήνδ' οὐρανίην ἀψίδα χρόνῳ μογέουσιν  
 Ῥωμανὸς ἤδρασεν ὀλβιόδωρος ἄναξ,  
 ὃς καὶ χρυσοῦ πεντήκοντα τάλαντα θεοῖο  
 ὑμνοπόλοισι νέμειν πρόσθετο εὐσεβέως.

*Also this celestial apse, withered with time,  
 has been secured by Romanos, the bliss-bestowing emperor,  
 who in addition has also piously distributed  
 fifty golden talents among those responsible for religious hymns.*

Since we have ample historiographic evidence that Romanos III Argyropoulos spent much money on the church of Hagia Sophia and its clerics, it seems almost certain that he is the emperor Romanos mentioned here.<sup>60</sup> The word ὑμνοπόλος, in poetic usage, can mean ‘poet’; however, when later writers spoke of ὑμνοπόλοι in the context of a church, they seemed to be referring more specifically to ‘hymn singers’, or perhaps ‘hymn composers’,<sup>61</sup> and I think this more specific definition applies in this case. The initial word καὶ suggests that it formed only one part of a poetic cycle adorning a restoration programme of the church carried out by Romanos.

The epigram is directly related to the place where it was visible, referring to it as ‘this apse’ (v. 1: τήνδ' ἀψίδα). The Byzantine visitor to Hagia Sophia, beholding the beauty and wealth of the apse, would instantly be reminded of the patron responsible for it. The epigram gives the necessary information about the provenance of the inscribed object and the identity of the patron. It defines the object as a public gift from the emperor to the community.

At the same time, the epigram glorifies. The poem serves a particular ideology: the emperor appears as a generous and pious protector of divine glory in his empire. The gift is presented as resulting from particular positive qualities of the emperor: his generosity (v. 2: ὀλβιόδωρος) and piety (v. 4: εὐσεβέως). This epigram is clearly a form of social ostentation: it is an expense, an act of philanthropy, that is made public through epigrams.

The second half of the inscription is not directly related to its physical location, since it mentions the distribution of money amongst *hymnopoloi*. Exceptionally, the epigram records here a

<sup>60</sup> Mercati, ‘Iscrizioni di Santa Sofia’, 291–2.

<sup>61</sup> See, for instance, Michael Attaleiates, *Historia* (ed. Perez-Martin), 226.

donation that bears no relation to a visible object. This may also help to explain why a precise payment is mentioned. Only very rarely does one find a precise amount of money mentioned in an inscription recording a donation. When an epigram on an object or building indicates that this building had been restored by someone, the result of this expense is visible and self-explanatory. But a donation of money to *hymnopoloi* cannot be expressed or demonstrated by a visible object, hence an explicit mention of the sum paid.

Christophoros 12 is likewise a dedicatory epigram that publicizes personal expenditure on the restoration of a building. This three-line epigram in hexameters makes it clear that a certain Eustathios, a *zygostates*, has restored a church (which is not further specified). The renovations were made at Eustathios' own expense (12.1: ἐῆ δαπάνη). The epigram is built around the argument that this money has been well spent: Eustathios the *zygostates* (literally 'the one who balances') 'well weighs out his money' (v. 1: *Εὐστάθιος, χρυσοῖο τάλαντα ὅς ἐδ σταθμίζει*). Eustathios' honorary functions (*chartou-larios, illustrios*) are mentioned in detail and make up the entire third line of the poem. Again, the donor goes to great lengths to identify himself and to make his expenses known to the wider public. The readers of the epigram are made well aware of the identity of the generous giver responsible for the public act of largesse. Just as in Romanos' epigram, a wealthy individual makes a personal gift to the community.

A special category of dedicatory poems is that of book epigrams (or 'metrical paratexts'). In fact, the overwhelming majority of extant dedicatory poems have a book as their subject and, at the same time, as their medium. This medium was, of course, far more favourable to the preservation of its epigrams than other contexts. But precisely because book epigrams occupy the same surface as the object they accompany—the parchment on which the words are written—their status as epigrams is at first sight less visible.

Books are to be found at the juncture between the immateriality of spiritual experience and the materiality of this earthly human world. As Daniele Bianconi has demonstrated, the book forms part of the metaphor of the 'Word becoming matter', echoing the Incarnation of Christ.<sup>62</sup> The book is thus a material object that nevertheless, in

<sup>62</sup> D. Bianconi, 'Et le livre s'est fait poésie', in: P. Odorico, M. Hinterberger, and P. Agapitos, (eds), «*Doux remède . . .*» *Poésie et poétique à Byzance* (Paris 2009), 15–35.

contrast to other material objects, partakes of the spirituality of the word. This feature is eminently present in book epigrams, which themselves negotiate the coming into being of the book—that is, the materialization of the spiritual word into a tangible text on parchment or paper, written, bound, and perhaps decorated and illustrated. The term ‘negotiation’ is chosen because book epigrams state the patron’s motives to produce the book, towards a public of readers. They are connected to the specific materialization in one specific manuscript, not to a text as an abstract entity. It needs to be said that the dichotomy between books being private objects and other artefacts being public objects is not absolute. Books can also be objects belonging to the public space. Books, especially the more sumptuous ones, were frequently exhibited in public.<sup>63</sup>

The structure, purpose, and vocabulary of dedicatory book epigrams do not differ essentially from those of dedicatory epigrams on other objects. Yet there are some typical elements peculiar to book epigrams.<sup>64</sup> The act of contemplating in the case of art objects is supplanted by the act of reading. Moreover, in book epigrams, the figure of the ‘author’ of the book (often a Church Father or apostle) may play a significant role in the dedication.

A typical example is the following frequently occurring epigram on the evangelist John, to be found (amongst other, earlier and later, manuscripts) in the gospels *Sinait. gr.* 172 (a.1067), fol. 168, *Londin. Add.* 17470 (eleventh century), fol. 220, and *Meteora Metam.* 540.<sup>65</sup>

Στίχοι εἰς τὸν ἅγιον Ἰωάννην

Βροντῆς γόνον σὲ Χριστὸς εἰκότως ἔφη  
ὡς τὴν ἀναρχον πατρὸς ἐξ ἀναίτιου  
γέννησεν αὐτοῦ σοῖς θεοφθόγοις λόγοις  
μέγιστα βροντήσαντα τῇ κτίσει πάση,  
εὐαγγελιστὰ παμμάκαρ καὶ παρθένε,

5

<sup>63</sup> G. Cavallo, ‘Libri in scena’, in: E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies. I. Plenary Papers* (Aldershot 2006), 345–64.

<sup>64</sup> See also G. Cavallo, ‘Forme e ideologie della committenza libraria tra Oriente e Occidente’, in: *Committenti e produzione artistico-letteraria nell’alto medioevo occidentale: 4–10 aprile 1991* (Spoleto 1992), 617–43.

<sup>65</sup> Edition in W. Hörandner, ‘Randbemerkungen zum Thema Epigramme und Kunstwerke’, in: C. Scholz and G. Makris (ed.), *Polypetros Nous. Miscellanea für Peter Schreiner zu seinem 60. Geburtstag* (Munich/Leipzig 2000), 69–82, here at 79 and K. Bentein and F. Bernard, ‘A Cycle of Book Epigrams on the Four Evangelists’, *Scriptorium* 65.2 (2011), 237–49.

φωστήρ Ἰωάννη τέ τῶν ἀποστόλων  
 καί πλείον αὐτῶν κυρίῳ πεφιλέμε·  
 ἀλλ' ὡς πρὸς αὐτὸν νῦν ἔχων παρρησίαν  
 ἄνωθεν αἰτοῦ τὴν λύσιν τῶν πατισμάτων  
 ἐμοὶ δοθῆναι τῷ πρόθῳ κεκτημένῳ  
 τὴν παντὸς ὄλβου τήνδε τιμιωτέραν  
 τῶν σῶν φαειῶν δογμάτων θείαν βίβλον.

*Verses on Saint John*

*Christ rightly called you 'son of thunder',  
 as you have with your divinely spoken words  
 loudly announced to the entire creation  
 his birth without a beginning from a Father without a cause,  
 blissful evangelist and virgin, John,  
 splendour of the apostles,  
 and among them the most beloved of the Lord.  
 Now, since you have freedom of speech with him,  
 ask from above that remission of sins may be given to me,  
 for I have zealously obtained  
 this divine book with your splendid dogmas,  
 worth more than any wealth.*

In this epigram, John is asked to be an intermediary between the patron of this book and Christ. Since John is 'most beloved' of Christ, he has freedom of speech (v. 7) with Christ. As often in dedicatory epigrams, a saint or the Theotokos acts as an intermediary between humans and God. In this case, John is singled out because the patron has performed a service for him, by 'obtaining' this book with John's gospel. In this poem, the patron suggests a transaction: the dedication is represented as an exchange of gifts, a quite explicit *do ut des*. The specific argument is that the patron of the book has made a considerable expenditure: he has 'acquired' this book. In exchange for this expenditure (of time, energy, and money), he requests that remission of sins might be given (v. 10: *δοθῆναι*) to him.

The verb that expresses the act of the patron is *κεκτημένῳ*. As Karl Krumbacher pointed out long ago in a still-relevant study, in Byzantine dedications the verb *κτάομαι* denotes the possession of an object as well as the 'funding' of it (the *Stiftung*).<sup>66</sup> This 'funding' implies

<sup>66</sup> K. Krumbacher, 'Κτήτωρ. Ein lexicographischer Versuch', *Indogermanische Forschungen* 25 (1909), 393–421.

that the patron makes possible the production of the book by providing the funds for its manufacture and material. In both the German ‘Stiftung’ and the English ‘foundation’, we encounter the same ambiguity between ‘founding’ and ‘funding’. The object remains a private possession, but it is meant to serve public welfare and edification, and, ultimately, it is dedicated in honour of a saint or God.

In a study of the signification of the word *κτήτωρ*, Kambourova pointed out that ‘possession’ in a religious public sphere is to be understood as a transition between private possession and gift to the divine.<sup>67</sup> As a result, the owner is only a ‘modal proprietary’: the object in question is dedicated to Christ, and the individual person gives the object away in preparation for his eventual detachment from all matter. So we do not always have to suppose a physical or economic transfer of the object here on earth. What is central is the purpose and devotion with which the object is ‘acquired’ or produced. In the translations of these notions, I will mostly stick to the usual terms of a ‘patron’ ‘funding’ something, which to my mind still quite correctly catches the meaning of the Byzantine Greek terminology.

The verb *κτάομαι* is often replaced by a verb that denotes the act of ‘producing’ the object. The verb *τεύχω* is the most general of these. In the case of this verb, too, a semantic problem arises: in most cases, the verb does not refer to the physical manufacture of the object (the scribe’s writing, the artist’s creation), as many studies seem to assume,<sup>68</sup> but rather to the funding of the project in general, its production in the broadest possible sense. The verb is thus often used in a causative sense: the object is ‘caused to be made’ by someone. For instance, in the epigram accompanying the famous menologium of Basileios II (*Vat. gr.* 1613, fol. A),<sup>69</sup> the production of the book is described with the verb *τεύξας*, with Basileios as subject of the verb (v. 13), but this obviously does not imply that the emperor wrote this book himself: it implies that he funded the whole project.

<sup>67</sup> T. Kambourova, ‘Ktitor: le sens du don des panneaux votifs dans le monde byzantin’, *Byz* 78 (2008), 261–87.

<sup>68</sup> For this observation, see also Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 159.

<sup>69</sup> E. Follieri, *Codices graeci. Bibliothecae Vaticanae selecti temporum locorumque ordine digesti commentariis et transcriptionibus instructi* (Vatican City 1969), 34. See also I. Ševčenko, ‘The Illuminators of the Menologium of Basil II’, *DOP* 16 (1962), 245–76, esp. 272–3.

The term *γράφω* is also ambiguous: it is certainly not always used for the physical act of writing. At the end of *Vat. gr.* 1650, a manuscript from 1037 containing a New Testament with commentary and works of Chrysostom, we find (fol. 185v) the epigram inc. *εἴληφε τέρμα βίβλος ἡγλαῖσμένη*.<sup>70</sup> In this epigram, Nikolaos, bishop of Reggio Calabria, states that he has ‘written’ this book (v. 3: *ἔγραψε*). In the following epigram (inc. *ἡ πηγὴ ᾧδε τῶν μαθητῶν τοῦ λόγου*), which is basically a conflation of three existing book epigrams on evangeliaries, Nikolaos identifies himself again as bishop in a supplementary verse, and asks the readers to ‘admire his initiative’ (v. 10: *θαύμαζε τῆς εὐβουλίας*). After this epigram, we find the following notice (in prose): ‘this volume was written by the hand of Theodoros Sikeliotes *klerikos* by order of the bishop Nikolaos, who is its patron (*ktetor*)’.<sup>71</sup> In other words, the physical writing was done by a certain Theodoros Sikeliotes,<sup>72</sup> while Nikolaos, also expressly named *ktetor*, was the commissioner of the book. The addition *διὰ χειρὸς* is a clear sign that Theodoros was the physical scribe. The expression *ἔγραψε* that Nikolaos used for himself in the first epigram has to be taken in a more abstract sense: he ‘had’ the book written.<sup>73</sup>

The dedicatory epigram of the Theodore Psalter (*Londin. Add.* 19.352), a lavishly decorated psalter created in the Stoudios monastery, is to be found on fol. 207v, after the main text. Next to the epigram we see a figure, identified as Michael the Synkellos, portrayed as presenting the book. The epigram itself, executed in *epigraphische Auszeichnungsmajuskel* and golden ink, reads:<sup>74</sup>

<sup>70</sup> On the manuscript and the epigram: C. Giannelli, *Codices Vaticani Graeci. Codices 1485–1683* (Vatican City 1961), 372 and F. Euangelatou-Notara, *Σημειώματα ἑλληνικῶν κωδίκων ὡς πηγὴ διὰ τὴν ἔρευναν τοῦ οἰκονομικοῦ καὶ κοινωνικοῦ βίου τοῦ Βυζαντίου ἀπὸ τοῦ 9ου αἰῶνος μέχρι τοῦ ἔτους 1204* (Athens 1982), 153.

<sup>71</sup> *Ἐγράφη αὕτη ἡ δέλτος διὰ χειρὸς Θεοδώρου κληρικοῦ Σικελιώτου κατ’ ἐπιτροπὴν Νικολαοῦ ἐπισκόπου κτήτορος ταύτης.*

<sup>72</sup> As such appearing in E. Gamillscheg, D. Harlfinger, and H. Hunger, *Repertorium der griechischen Kopisten, 800–1600* (Vienna 1981–9), III, nr. 217.

<sup>73</sup> See also K. Bentein and K. Demoen, ‘The Reader in Eleventh-Century Book Epigrams’, in: F. Bernard and K. Demoen (eds), *Poetry and its Contexts in Eleventh-century Byzantium* (Farnham/Burlington 2012), 69–88, here at 79.

<sup>74</sup> C. Barber, *Theodore Psalter. Electronic Facsimile*. CD-ROM (Champaign, IL 2005), 207v, text, p. 4. Digital images of the manuscript are accessible at the website British Library, *Digitised Manuscripts*, <[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add\\_MS\\_19352](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_19352)> (last accessed 10/01/2013) with further bibliography.



Αἰνῶ σε σῶτερ τερματίσας τὴν βίβλον  
τοῦ σοῦ προφήτου καὶ σοφοῦ βασιλέως.

*I praise you, Saviour, upon completing this book  
of your prophet and wise king.*

The text of this poem suggests that Michael the Synkellos has physically written the book, ‘completing’ it in the manner of a scribe completing his book. This is, however, not the case. On the facing page, another colophon is added, in prose, in which the monk Theodoros announces that he has written the manuscript by his own hand by order (ἐπιταγή) of Michael the Synkellos. This prose colophon is followed by a one-verse epigram, written in *epigraphische Auszeichnungsmajuskel* and in gold ink, just like the other epigram (see also above, 83). This dodecasyllable attributes the glory of the book to its origin and ultimate beneficiary, that is, Christ: Χριστῷ ἄνακτι δόξα καὶ κράτος πρέπει (‘Glory and power befit Christ the Lord’). Thus, in the images and epigrams, Michael ‘makes’ the book and ‘gives’ it to Christ, through David. In reality, a certain Theodore wrote the book for his superior Michael.

From the two examples above, it appears that verse dedications, visually more ‘elevated’ than prose notices, reflect also the more ‘elevated’ aspect of patronage. The prose notices mention the real physical scribe, but the dedicatory poems, instead, maintain a symbolic discourse, avoiding any crude reference to the ‘commission’ or the physical scribe. They project the dedication on a more sublimated level, between patron and saint or divine person.

Reading the book is the act by which book epigrams fulfil their purpose. A frequently occurring poem (inc. *Ἐξαγγελιστῶν τοὺς θεοπνεύστους λόγους*) in Byzantine gospels states that the intention behind the creation of the book is the religious edification of the community. I will take here the example of the eleventh-century manuscript *Athen*. 174, where the poem is executed in splendid gilded epigraphic uncials (fol. 2).<sup>75</sup> Rather than the content of the

<sup>75</sup> Edition in: A. Marava-Chatzinikolaou and Ch. Toufexi-Paschou, *Catalogue of the Illuminated Byzantine Manuscripts of the National Library of Greece. Volume I: Manuscripts of the New Testament Texts 10th–12th Century* (Athens 1978), 95–6, with an image of the poem (fig. 181), and R. Stefec, ‘Anmerkungen zu einigen handschriftlich überlieferten Epigrammen in epigraphischer Auszeichnungsmajuskel’, *JÖB* 59 (2009), 203–12, at 211.

book (the gospels), the specific features of this unique copy are recommended, such as the beauty of its script and the selection and organization of the text. The readers are addressed as they transcribe the book, or read it softly aloud (v. 10: *μεταγράφωντες ἢ λαλοῦντες ἡρέμα*). The patron here enters into a transaction with the readers of the book, rather than with a divine or saintly person. The act of reading, here also involving the copying of the book, stands central to the purpose of the dedication. The readers will enjoy the book and profit from it, but in exchange for that they should remember the patron in their prayers. The patron himself is presented in multiple ways. He is the one who has ‘made’ the book (v. 11: *τετευχότα*). But he is also the owner, the one who has ‘acquired’ the book (see the words *κεκτημένον* and *κτημα*, v. 13). In sum, he is the *δеспότης πρωτοουργός* (v. 12), the patron who gave the initiative. His eagerness (v. 13: *προθύμως*) is also mentioned, reflecting the zeal (v. 7: *ζήλον*) it is expected to arouse in the readers. His address to future readers, however, makes it clear that he offers the book as a public object, for the edification and enjoyment of others. This poem makes eminently clear that the act of a dedication is not (necessarily) a private agreement between patron and dedicatee, but a collective enterprise, involving all the actors who participate in the production and the use of a book.

Hence, these epigrams are closely tied to their object and cannot be properly understood without them. They form just one dimension, the textual dimension, of a wider project. I will take here the example of a book epigram adorning a portrait in the John Chrysostom manuscript *Sinait. gr. 364*, fol. 3<sup>r</sup>.<sup>76</sup> The miniature shows Monomachos and the two empresses, with Christ and two angels above in a gesture of protection. This is also exactly what the poem asks for: protection for the ruler of the earth and the two purple-born sisters. There is no doubt that in this case the poem and the image are carefully coordinated. In the first half of the thirteenth century, the manuscript was held in the monastery of St George in Mangana,<sup>77</sup> which indicates that it was personally commissioned by (or given to)

<sup>76</sup> Inc. ‘Ως τῆς τριάδος σῶτερ. On the miniature and the poem, see most extensively I. Spatharakis, *The Portrait in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts* (Leiden 1976), 99–102, with figure 66, and D. Harlfinger, D. R. Reinsch, and J. A. M. Sonderkamp, *Specimina Sinaitica. Die datierten griechischen Handschriften des Katharinen-Klosters auf dem Berge Sinai 9. bis 12. Jahrhundert* (Berlin 1983), 23–4.

<sup>77</sup> See Harlfinger e.a., *Specimina*, 24.

Monomachos. Whoever the poet was, he was closely involved in the manufacture of the manuscript, and he suited his words to the other (pictorial) dimensions of the patronage project.

Apart from the description of the actors and their actions, dedicatory poems nearly always state the motivations underlying the donor's expenditure. The key word used in the vocabulary of dedicatory epigrams to refer to these motivations is *πόθος* (often translated as 'desire').<sup>78</sup> Only slightly less frequent is the word group related to *προθυμία* (eagerness). Related ideas are *ζήλος* (zeal), *τὸ φιλότιμον* (ambition and desire for honour), and *ἔρως* (love). These words express the feelings of devotion and religious zeal with which the object is given. They are often added to the verb denoting the expense that is made.

In the ethics of the Byzantine dedication, *pothos* and related ideas play their own specific role. This is a book epigram found in several eleventh-century manuscripts (*Vat. Ottobon. gr.* 445, containing works of John Chrysostom, and *Vat. gr.* 342, a psalter from 1087 connected with Michael Attaleiates' foundation):<sup>79</sup>

Ἔσπευσαν ἄλλοι χρυσὸν εὐρεῖν ἐν βίῳ,  
 Ἄλλοι δὲ γῆν σπεύδουσιν ἢ καὶ μαργάρους  
 Καὶ πάντα πλοῦτον προσλαβεῖν ἀπλησίᾳ.  
 Ὁ δεσπότης δὲ τοῦ παρόντος βιβλίου  
 Οὐ μαργαρίτας, οὐ λίθον, οὐ χρυσίον, 5  
 Τὴν καλλονὴν δὲ τῶν τοῦ προφήτου λόγων  
 Σοφῶς ἀνευρῶν ἐξ ἔρωτος ἐνθέου  
 Ἐνθεν συνῆξε πλοῦτον, ὃς μένει μόνος.  
 Πρὶ πάντα γῆς γὰρ καὶ λόγος μένει μόνος.  
 Ἄλλ' ὃ βραχίον δεξιᾶς ἀκηράτου, 10  
 Τὸν ταύτην κοσμήσαντα τῷ πολλῷ πόθῳ  
 Φρουρῶν σὺ σώσον οἷσπερ εὐδοκεῖς τρόποις.

*Some people have striven to find gold in this life.  
 Others, in their insatiate desire, are eager to take  
 earth, or pearls, or all forms of wealth.  
 The owner of the present book, however,  
 in his wisdom, and from a religious love,* 5

<sup>78</sup> See also Rhoby, 'Structure', 138–9 and Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 164.

<sup>79</sup> The edition I am using here is that of Mercati, *Collectanea Byzantina*, I, 617, with a correction at v. 9 adopted from another edition based on a more recent manuscript at Mercati, *Collectanea*, 618.

has discovered not pearls, nor stones, nor gold,  
 but the beauty of the prophet's words  
 and he has here collected this wealth, the only one which is permanent.  
 All things on earth pass by and only the Word remains;  
 but, oh, right arm of the sinless one, 10  
 protect the man who has beautified these words with much desire,  
 and save him in the manner which you see fit.

This epigram juxtaposes material wealth with inner feelings of devotion. *Pothos*, in this rhetoric, is a special kind of motivation, one devoid of any material interests. In this poem, the equivalent *ἔρωσ ἐνθεός* is given (v. 7): a love inspired by God. The production of a book, its organization, its scripture, its decoration: all these must be seen as signs of this devotion. Correspondingly, the reward that the patron expects for his effort can only be measured by the desire that motivates it, not by the crude value of his expenditure. Moreover, book epigrams never mention exact payments.<sup>80</sup>

Other epigrams develop the argumentation that material wealth is by no means a factor in the motivation to produce a book. There is a certain moral uneasiness that accompanies the dedication of artistic objects. The beauty or the opulence of an object could raise the suspicion that its patron is merely showing off his wealth, or hopes to 'buy' divine salvation. The long and elaborate epigram of Mark the Monk introducing his lavishly decorated small psalter, *Bodl. Clarke 15*,<sup>81</sup> begins with an apology. The book is so beautiful that the maker of it (v. 4: ὁ τετευχώς) might incur the accusation that it is exaggerated (v. 6: περιττός). Markos argues that one should not fix one's eyes on the outward beauty of the book, but on the inner meaning of the words. He has 'made' this book out of *pothos* (the word occurs literally at v. 4). His expense cannot be seen in economic terms; it is the depth of his devotion that should count in the assessment of his dedication. The discourse centred around the notion of *pothos* thus confirms the spiritual dimension of dedications.

Likewise, an inscription on an astrolabe, now held in Brescia, makes it clear that the donor, a certain Sergios, 'made' this object

<sup>80</sup> See Cavallo, 'Forme e ideologie', 626–7.

<sup>81</sup> Edition in: Gaisford, *Catalogus*, 59–60. See also M. Lauxtermann, 'The Perils of Travel: Mark the Monk and *Bodl. E.D. Clarke 15*', in: F. Bernard and K. Demoen (eds), *Poetry and its Contexts in Eleventh-century Byzantium* (Farnham/Burlington 2012), 195–206, at 201–2.

with much desire (v. 4: *σὸν πόθῳ τέτευχεν*).<sup>82</sup> The formulation is exactly the same as in book epigrams: the verb of producing (to be interpreted broadly) is accompanied by an adverbial adjunct that underlines the *pothos* of the donor. It is the realization of the object that stands central in Byzantine dedicatory epigrams: the donor provides the resources to have an object made as a result of his feelings of devotion.

#### 8.4. GIFTS

As we have remarked on many occasions, the ambition of our poets to see tangible rewards for their intellectual work is complicated by ethical constraints. Desire for mundane wealth is seen as objectionable, and authoring texts should stand far from ambition. Moreover, these poets form a self-conscious elite, with members keen to underline their superior status and devotion to superior intellectual ideals. This accords ill with direct pleas for patronage or with all too clear references to commissioned work. Still, these *literati* had services to offer and hoped that they could be exchanged somehow. To fulfil this double need, our poets made use of a powerful representation: that of the gift.

The gift is a universal phenomenon, and, as sociologists have pointed out, it is a social phenomenon adorned with a kind of magical grace: a transaction of goods and services is made without the recognition that it is an exchange.<sup>83</sup> No wonder that the concept recurs rather frequently in poetry of this period, whether in playful or more down-to-earth representations. Central to the idea of the gift is that it

<sup>82</sup> See also A. Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Ikonen und Objekten der Kleinkunst* (Vienna 2010), 223 (nr. Me52), and 224 for the frequent occurrences of the word *pothos* in Byzantine inscriptions.

<sup>83</sup> On gift giving as an anthropological phenomenon, see the seminal work of M. Mauss, *Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques* (Paris 1923); as a sociological phenomenon, see P. Bourdieu, *Le sens pratique* (Paris 1980), 191–4. On gifts as a transcultural tool, see A. Cutler, 'Significant Gifts: Patterns of Exchange in Late Antique, Byzantine, and Early Islamic Diplomacy', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38.1 (2008), 79–101. On gifts as a way to circumvent other transactions, see R. Morris, 'Reciprocal Gifts on Mount Athos in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries', in: W. Davies and P. Fouracre (eds), *The Languages of Gift in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge 2010), 171–92.

expects a certain counter gift. Just how explicitly this expectation should be stated is a difficult problem. Poetry of the eleventh century often turns to the gift as an adequate discourse, not only to solicit patronage, but also to confirm or improve the individual's status in society.<sup>84</sup>

#### 8.4.1. Exchanging words for things

In Mauroπους 57, an epigram on an image of the emperor in Euchaita, the generosity of Monomachos is praised.<sup>85</sup> Apparently, the emperor had issued a chrysobull reinstating the ancient imperial privileges of the city. The poem is explicit about the exchange being performed here: 'Therefore, he receives in exchange a righteous gift, by being depicted amongst our benefactors.'<sup>86</sup> The idea of rightful exchange between different kinds of services is represented with great consciousness and near-commercial precision. The image of the emperor made by the citizens of Euchaita is a favour in return for a privilege. The poem, here taking up the proper communication of the project, makes this expectation clear.

Likewise, in Mauroπους 80, an epigram on an icon in the monastery of the Archangel Michael in Sosthenios,<sup>87</sup> the idea of exchange for a gift is explicitly stated: the monks of this monastery address Christ, saying that he has provided a blissful reign to the current emperors. Significantly, it is said that Christ's goodness has induced the emperors to be 'an inexhaustible sea of rich favours' (vv. 3–4); with this, the monks represent Monomachos' generosity as a virtuous act inspired by God. In the following verses, they ask that the emperors may be protected and have a long reign. The dedication of

<sup>84</sup> F. Bernard, 'Gifts of Words: The Discourse of Gift-giving in Eleventh-century Byzantine Poetry' in: F. Bernard and K. Demoen (eds), *Poetry and its Contexts in Eleventh-century Byzantium* (Farnham/Burlington 2012), 37–51.

<sup>85</sup> On the epigram, see G. De Gregorio, 'Epigrammi e documenti. Poesia come fonte per la storia di chiese e monasteri bizantini', in: C. Gastgeber and O. Kresten (eds), *Sylloge Diplomatico-Palaeographica I. Studien zur byzantinischen Diplomatik und Paläographie* (Vienna 2010), 9–134, at 36–42.

<sup>86</sup> Mauroπους 57.11–12: ὁθεν δίκαιον ἀντιλαμβάνει γέρας, // εἰς τοὺς καθ' ἡμᾶς ἐγγραφεῖς εὐεργέτας.

<sup>87</sup> R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire Byzantin, I. Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat œcuménique, t. III. Les églises et les monastères* (Paris 1953), 359–92.

the icon, showing the image of the rulers, is a witness to this hope. The final verses of the poem state the motivation of the exchange (vv. 13–16):

πολλῶν τυχόντες δωρεῶν καὶ πλουσίων,  
ταύτην ἀμοιβὴν τοῖς καλοῖς εὐεργέταις  
ἀντεισφέρουσιν, ἱστοροῦντες εὐτέχνως  
σέ, Χριστέ μου, στέφοντα τούτους ἐνθάδε.

*Having received many rich gifts,  
[the monks] contribute in return this reward for their good benefactors,  
depicting artfully  
You, my Christ, crowning them here.*

As Karpozilos inferred,<sup>88</sup> the monastery had received imperial privileges from Konstantinos Monomachos. The monks in return dedicate an icon that honours the emperor. Yet Christ is nominally the primary subject of poem and image: the transaction of exchange is sublimated through the representation that both gift and counter gift are acts of devotion in honour of God. But the poem is clear that, as far as the monks are regarded, they would be happy that the exchange may continue: not for nothing, the generosity of the emperors in particular is lavishly praised. Thankfulness can here incite yet more gifts. Reciprocity is an important principle in this discourse, even where it is not expressly stated as such.

What is more important for the question of literary patronage is that *hoi logoi* are also involved in this logic of reciprocity. In Psellos' works in particular, we frequently encounter the concept of 'things for words'. One of the more spectacular instances of this concept, where it is very consciously reflected upon, is a letter of Psellos asking for a mule in exchange for a letter (*Ep. Sathas* 171).<sup>89</sup> Psellos exploits a play on the words *ἄλογον* (also referring to the mule) and *λόγος* to argue that his letter, as *logos*, is worth more than any material gift (*alogon*), but that the former should elicit support from the latter. In another letter, to Chasanēs, *krites* of Macedonia (*Ep. Sathas* 172), Psellos again weighs out the worth of the 'gift of words' in contrast to other material gifts. In this letter, the gift of words is worth less than the gift of gold, because the former can only metaphorically be

<sup>88</sup> Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, 89.

<sup>89</sup> F. Bernard, 'Exchanging *logoi* for *aloga*: Cultural Capital and Material Capital in a Letter of Michael Psellos', *BMGS* 35 (2011), 134–48.

described as gold, whereas the latter is real gold. But all the same, the gift of gold is less respectable (439.30: ἄτιμος) than the gift of words, which is an immaterial product of the mind. The playfulness of the reasoning should not lead us astray: a service consisting of words is here exchanged for gold. Psellos thus masterfully combines a discourse that retains the superior status of *hoi logoi* with the argument that it can and should be exchanged for material things.

With this in mind, I will approach some poems that offer themselves as a gift, but clearly expect something in return. The most poignant example is Psellos 16, presented as a gift, with the job of *notarios* as a possible reward. We have already argued that the opening of the poem heightens the symbolic value of the *logoi* Psellos promises to give—that is, the efforts and time he has invested in them.<sup>90</sup> Here, I want to focus on the poem's ending, which defines it as a gift and connects this with a rather explicit request (vv. 15–17):

δέδεξο λοιπὸν οἰκέτου δῶρον λόγον·  
 σὺ δ' ἀντιδοίης τήν κατ' ἀξίαν δόσιν  
 τοῖς σοῖς με πάντως συμβαλὼν νοταρίοις.

*So now accept this poem as a gift from a servant;  
 may you give me a reward of equal value  
 by recruiting me as one of your secretaries.*

When *hoi logoi* are involved, a peculiar value system comes into place. The 'gift of words' (the δῶρον that is at the same time a λόγος, see v. 15) is here supposed to be exactly equal in value to a job. In other words, a dozen verses are represented as being worth as much as the first important step in the bureaucratic system. This means that the emperor is asked to subscribe to the same discourse that values *hoi logoi*, and thus to show himself as a ruler enlightened by literary culture. But of course, what Psellos really has to offer is his expertise in *hoi logoi*. This expertise, as the beginning of the poem emphasizes, has been acquired at the cost of long labours, and Psellos hopes to see these investments compensated.

The exchange is proposed here in a quite blunt way, in contrast to the normal discourse of gift giving. I think this should be related to the fact that Psellos still held an inferior position (he also identifies himself as an οἰκέτης, a humble servant; see v. 15). There was not yet

<sup>90</sup> See above, 171–3.



an elite in place that could consider it self-evident that literary efforts would be recompensed automatically. Neither could Psellos yet afford to maintain the self-image of a ‘philosopher of kings’, pursuing edification and knowledge in a manner totally independent of social or material support.

Psellos’ attempt to further or begin a career by offering a poem as a gift is by no means an isolated attempt. Another example is an anonymous poem preserved in *Athen.* 1040.<sup>91</sup> The poem, eighty-five verses long, bears the title ‘For the emperor lord Konstantinos Monomachos’. It also mentions this emperor in the text itself (vv. 50 and 78). The poet says about himself that he is a teacher (referring to his pupils in v. 40), that he is sixty years old (v. 25), and that he has written a work documenting the rebellions of Leon Tornikios and Ioannes Batatzes (vv. 1–4).

From the beginning of the poem, our teacher takes an extremely obsequious stance. He fears that the arrow of Monomachos’ power may kill him if he dares to write, although he has kept silent up to now (vv. 8–9). He lets it be understood that it could be perceived as an impertinence to approach the emperor with a request. The request is introduced by saying that the emperor is surrounded by a splendid circle of servants (vv. 15–20). They have received dignities because they have shown themselves so faithful to Monomachos’ empire (v. 21). The consequence is logical: the emperor should put the poet on an equal level (*ἰσόθρονον*) to that of his peers (v. 36): it is absurd that his own pupils are seated (*ἐνθρονίζεσθαι*) above him. I know that I do not ask for a little thing, the argument then goes, but it is fitting to ask great things from such a great and generous emperor. Monomachos is depicted as a gold-flowing river of *rogai* (vv. 47–51). Understandably, it is not the function itself that this man is after, but the *rogai* connected with it, the annual payments distributed by the emperor to officials.<sup>92</sup> In the following verses, the generosity of Monomachos is described in terms that seem to come straight from the blissful *basilikoi logoi* of Psellos: without hesitating, he pours out dignities to everyone (vv. 54–5), thereby representing an immense *charis* (v. 55). The poem closes with a prayer to Christ to protect Monomachos and the two empresses.

<sup>91</sup> Edited in Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, 72–3. On the authorship of the poem, see above, 26.

<sup>92</sup> P. Lemerle, ‘Roga et rente d’état’, *REB* 25 (1967), 71–100.

The request itself is represented as an exchange of things for words (vv. 28–32):

ὡς οὖν βασιλεύς, τῇ δικαίᾳ σου κρίσει  
 ζυγοστατήσας ὃν προβάλλομαι λόγον,  
 εἴ μὲν τι τολμῶ τῷ κράτει τῷ σῶ πρόπον 30  
 καί μοι προσήκον ὄντι δούλων ἐσχάτων,  
 πλήρωσον αὐτὸ καὶ παράσχου τὴν χάριν.

*Therefore, as emperor, weigh with your righteous judgement  
 the poem I hereby present to you,  
 and if I dare something worthy of your power 30  
 and fitting for me, being among the most base of slaves,  
 fulfil this, and provide me with this favour.*

The emperor is asked to consider this poem and assess its worth. He should weigh it on a balance (ζυγοστατέω is a rather emphatic verb), and then decide if a favour of equal value can be granted. In the discourse maintained here, only these verses should be taken into consideration, as if the distribution of promotions is based upon admiration for literary accomplishments. The giver himself takes the initiative by submitting the poem, which it is now up to the emperor to assess (see the verb προβάλλομαι, v. 29).

The reward that the poet has in mind is clearly described as a counter gift (vv. 45–6):

οὐδεὶς δὲ πάντως μέμψεται μοι σὺν λόγῳ,  
 ζητεῖν με φάσκων δωρεὰν παρ' ἀξίαν.

*Nobody will criticize me with reason,  
 by saying that I request a gift that is too valuable.<sup>93</sup>*

The transaction is represented as an exchange of gifts. The poem itself motivates the exchange and makes an appeal to the righteousness of Monomachos. The gift itself, in line with the obsequious stance that the poet assumes throughout the whole poem, is represented as a daring act (v. 30: τολμῶ), which the poet hopes is fit for such a powerful emperor. If the emperor refuses, this should not be attributed to his inability to give a counter gift, but to the judgement that a

<sup>93</sup> Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, 72 puts these verses between quotation marks, suggesting that they are the proverb announced in v. 44. But this obviously refers to the verse before (v. 43), where the poet uses the (proverbial) image of an old man carrying young men on his shoulders. A full stop should be placed after *παροιμία* (v. 44).

man of such inferior status should not disturb him. This is also echoed in the verses in which the poet says he fears that his poem will be a burden to the emperor's ears: 'as the saying goes, a long speech is a burden for the ears' (v. 70: *μηκος λόγου γὰρ ὠσὶν ἄχθος, ὡς λόγος*). The social conventions that play their role in the dynamics of patronage come here to the fore. On the one hand, there is the poet who must take the opportunity to advance his case and have the impertinence to force access to the emperor; on the other, he needs to be conscious of his position and show enough deference.

Christophoros' poem 55 is perfectly comparable. Significantly, it is a poem written *ὡς ἀπὸ προσώπου*: Christophoros wrote it for *protospatharios* Ioannes Hypsinous.<sup>94</sup> The argument is exactly the same: Monomachos is hailed as a generous emperor, everyone benefits from his donations and promotions, except for the applicant, who hopes that the emperor will remedy this fault. The rhetorical argumentation is built around two instances of wordplay: Monomachos is like the river Pactolus. However, unlike that river, he does not only stream with gold (3: *χρυσορροίας*), but also with honorary functions (4: *τιμορροίας*, a neologism). The request itself is also based on wordplay: Monomachos, who elevates (10: *ὑψῶν*) everyone, will also elevate Hypsinous (11: *ἀνυψώσειε καὶ τὸν Ὑψίνου*).

The image of the Pactolus river reoccurs in a panegyric oration of Psellos (*Or. pan.* 2.668), referring as well to Monomachos' generosity. The convenience of this comparison is twofold: it fits the greater set of metaphors of streams, rain, etc., which is often used to refer to rewards and generosity (passim in Psellos' *basilikoï logoi* and also in the begging poem from *Athen.* 1040, v. 51: *ῥοὺν μιμείται χρυσόρρειθρον*) while it can at the same time refer rather explicitly to gold, the thing that mattered, of course, when speaking about rewards.

<sup>94</sup> F. Lauritzen, 'Christopher of Mytilene's Parody of the Haughty Mauroπους', *BZ* 100 (2007), 125–32 establishes a direct link between this poem and Mauroπους, *Ep.* 33: according to Lauritzen, the poem is a parody on this letter, sneering at a quest of Mauroπους for promotion. I believe this thesis is for many reasons untenable: the very unlikely identification between a *protospatharios* Hypsinous and Mauroπους, who never held that rank; the fact that Mauroπους, also in *Ep.* 33, was never eager for a promotion; the unlikelihood that Christophoros, not belonging to Mauroπους' and Psellos' circle, would have read *Ep.* 33; and the ubiquity of the metaphor of 'golden streams', a metaphor that is for Lauritzen an important indication for involving Mauroπους, *Ep.* 33.

Apparently, the habit of using verse to write a petition was so widespread that Hypsinous made an appeal to Christophoros, writing a poem in his name. This technique of writing *ὡς ἀπὸ προσώπου*, literally, ‘as if from the person’, is widespread. A certain Lazarus, newly appointed as *chartoularios*, also hired a poet to compose a poem thanking the patriarch Michael Keroularios.<sup>95</sup> This shows that poets were sometimes just craftsmen, writing poems after a specific commission, in these two cases for requesting a promotion.

Back now to the more rhetorical level of exchange between ‘things’ and ‘words’. The ‘gift of words’ was a concept also cherished by Mauropous, and, as so often, it served to confirm his self-representation. The overtones of the ‘gift of words’ become particularly apparent in poems 27 and 28. These two poems are introductory statements (or *programmata*) to two of his orations (Mauropous, *Or.* 183 and 177, respectively). They act as dedications of the texts. Twice, the dedication is addressed to saints (in poem 27, to the Theotokos; in poem 28, to the Archangels). Both poems clearly identify the text in hand as a gift, a *δῶρον* (27.24; 28.5). In contrast to other dedicatory poems in Mauropous’ corpus, these dedications are purely personal. In both poems, Mauropous mentions that he lives near the churches dedicated to the recipients of his orations (27.30–1; 28.18). This is one more instance of the attachment to Constantinopolitan neighbourhoods that we have also seen in Christophoros’ poems.

In poem 27, Mauropous emphasizes the eternal value of his ‘garland of words’, for words are not prone to wither, as normal flowers are. In a gesture typical of dedicatory poems, as we have seen, Mauropous asserts that the Theotokos should not consider the intrinsic worth of his discourse, but his *pothos*. At the end of the poem, Mauropous asks for rewards both for the *pothos* and the *logos* (v. 34: *ἀμοιβὴν τοῦ πόθου καὶ τοῦ λόγου*). And elsewhere, Mauropous says that it is not the work itself but his *pothos* that is an honour to its recipient (v. 15: *τοῦ πόθου δ’ ἐπαξίως*). He almost excuses himself for being able only to give words: these are the only means at his disposal to honour the Theotokos. This, of course, serves to highlight all the more Mauropous’ identity as an intellectual, and—even better—as a poor intellectual.

<sup>95</sup> For the incipit, see Lambros, *Μαρκιανός*, 6. The poem will be edited in Spingou, ‘Snapshots’.

This aspect is elaborated in poem 28. Mauropous argues in the opening verses that he would not spare anything valuable that he could give to his saintly patrons. But, unlike other people who are rich, he is poor (stressed again at v. 13). The only thing he can give is his words. These are valuable anyway, and they are given with good intentions (v. 4: *προθυμία*). Since he feels only love for words and learning (vv. 7–9), he can only offer a gift consisting of words. This devotion is characterized as love (v. 7: *ἔρως*), a term with strong mystical overtones. In marked contrast to the previous poem, Mauropous avers that his words are bound to dissipate in the wind (v. 27); in return, he asks for the eternal Word. Mauropous' gift of words for the Archangels thus once more enunciates his favoured self-representational image as a poor devoted intellectual. He distinguishes himself from other people who are rich in material things: he, by contrast, is materially poor, but he is devoted to the spiritual ideal of words. All the same, Mauropous emphasizes that the preconditions for the creation of such a gift, learning and knowledge of literature, were only gathered at the price of long labours (see v. 10: *ἃ μοι συνῆξαν οἱ μακροὶ μόλις πόνοι*). Just as in Psellos 16, where Psellos had stressed his intensive labours on behalf of *hoi logoi*, Mauropous underlines that gifts of words require sacrifices.

#### 8.4.2. Exquisite gifts: Christophoros and the gift of words

In Christophoros' collection, we encounter many poems that accompany gifts sent to a friend, or react in response to a gift. Instead of the dedicatory poems written by other poets of the eleventh century, which dedicate public gifts, often made by emperors, Christophoros' gifts circulate within a small milieu of intimate friends. As a result, they respond to different conventions and meet a different purpose.

Poem 43 thanks his friend Niketas Synadenos for the gift of bandages for his sore feet. Niketas' gift is clearly identified as such (v. 6: *δόσις*); the theme of sickness is a very common one in Byzantine epistolography.<sup>96</sup> We, of course, know Niketas as an intimate intellectual friend of Christophoros.

<sup>96</sup> M. Mullett, 'The Classical Tradition in the Byzantine Letter', in: M. Mullett and R. Scott (eds), *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition* (Oxford 1981), 75–93, esp. 80.

Poem 45 accompanies a gift of fresh jars (containing aromatic wine?)<sup>97</sup> for a friend in summertime. Christophoros asks his friend to accept his gift (v. 1: δῶρον). As with every poem of Christophoros, it cannot do without a pun or clever antithesis: it is a cold gift, but is given out of fervent *pothos*, the expression θερμὸς πόθος (v. 2), ‘burning desire’, being a very usual expression to denote the heartfelt intentions with which a gift is dedicated.<sup>98</sup> As is usual in the case of letters responding to gifts, Christophoros describes the joy he felt at receiving the gift.

Poem 64 accompanies a book (and perhaps more: the poem is greatly damaged) sent to the *protopapas* Ioannes. The few words that remain refer to a sincere friendship (v. 3: γνησιωτάτων φίλων and v. 6: φιλούμενος πλέον).

Poems 87 and 88 form, of course, a case apart. They are responses to a gift sent from the countryside. The first poem reacts to a gift of grapes, arguing that letters are better; the second poem does exactly the opposite. These poems too belong in the tradition of gift letters. They are a playful game, of course, but they indicate that the refusal of a gift, if done elegantly and eruditely, was not out of the question in the social conventions of learned Byzantine circles.

Poem 94 accompanies ‘mesisklia’ sent to (or from) a certain Leon.<sup>99</sup> In the second line, reference is made to the gift (δωρεά), and from another line we can infer that it was given with affection (v. 4: στοργή), an equivalent for the notion of *pothos*. The meaning of the allusion in the last verse to a Psalm (19.4) is not clear: does Christophoros wish Leon good wealth, does he express his hope that the gift is appreciated,<sup>100</sup> or does he perhaps imply that the next gift (from himself or, rather implausibly, from Leon) will be somewhat ‘fatter’?

<sup>97</sup> This is suggested in Crimi, *Canzoniere*, 89–90.

<sup>98</sup> See, in the domain of eleventh-century book epigrams, the poem inc. ‘H δέλτος αὐτῆ τῆν τετράστοιχον κτίσιν, in *Monac. gr.* 594; edition in: W. Hörmann, ‘Das Supplement der griechischen Handschriften der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek’, in: H.-G. Beck (ed.), *ΧΑΛΙΚΕΣ. Festgabe für die Teilnehmer am XI. Internationalen Byzantinistenkongress München 15–20. September 1958* (Munich 1958), 39–65 (at description of cod. 594).

<sup>99</sup> It is not known what these ‘mesisklia’ were, cf. *LBG*, s.v. ‘mesisklia’: ‘eine Speise?’

<sup>100</sup> So Crimi, *Canzoniere*, 136.

Poem 110, according to the title, thanks a certain Kosmas for the wine he has sent. Apart from a compliment for the wine, that it tastes like divine nectar, nothing remains of the poem.

Poem 117 accompanies a perfume of roses for the monk Athanasios, suggesting that Athanasios might pass the gift on to other friends, for he probably will not like it, because he ‘gives off the smell of virtue, which always remains’ (v. 4). The poem appears here as more complimentary than the gift itself. It shows that the gift itself is not as important in the social conventions of these circles: Christophoros implies that his gift is not even appropriate to his friend. It is the accompanying letter or poem explaining the purpose and motivation of the gift that should be assessed.

Apart from these gift *billets*, Christophoros’ collection includes some poems that elaborate a particular *topos* in connection with gift exchange: protestation against receiving a material gift, because a gift of words is so much more dear to the recipient. In this respect, they adopt a *topos* very beloved in letters.<sup>101</sup> In this way, Christophoros’ gifts are closely connected to the ideals of intellectual friendship.<sup>102</sup>

Poem 115 protests against the gift of biscuits that his friend Nikephoros sent to him during the time of the *broumalion*. Christophoros asks for words, because these are his sweet meal, as he is ‘a devotee and worshipper of *logoi*’ (v. 3). ‘Normal’ material gifts, such as would be given at this popular festival, are contrasted with, and found inferior to, the immaterial literary gift. Only the latter can be a source of pleasure. In this way, the appreciation of *hoi logoi* is represented as a socially exclusive, exquisite achievement. Christophoros wants his friend, and of course also the wider audience, to understand that the refusal of the ‘normal’ gift presupposes a more exclusive set of conventions.

Poem 124, of which only fragments remain, is very similar. This poem is written on the occasion of the *kalandai*, the first day of the year. Christophoros presents here a gift to his friends: these very

<sup>101</sup> See A. Karpozilos, ‘Realia in Byzantine Epistolography X–XIIc’, *BZ* 77 (1984), 20–37, esp. 20–1; D. Chernoglazov, ‘Was bedeuten drei Fische? Betrachtung von Geschenken in byzantinischen Briefen’, in: M. Grünbart (ed.), *Geschenke erhalten die Freundschaft. Gabentausch und Netzwerkpflge im europäischen Mittelalter* (Münster 2011), 55–69, esp. 59–60. Examples abound in Psellos’ letters: see Ep. *K-D* 40.

<sup>102</sup> F. Bernard, ‘Greet Me With Words. Gifts and Intellectual Friendships in Eleventh-Century Byzantium’, in: Grünbart (ed.), *Geschenke erhalten die Freundschaft*, 1–11.

words (v. 6: *ἰδοὺ δίδωμι τούσδε δῶρα τοὺς λόγους*). He proudly declares himself to be the creator of this gift: 'with my writing pen I create beats of words' (v. 8: *γραφῆς καλάμῳ ῥημάτων τελῶ κρότους*). The poem ends with the statement that 'nothing is better than this in life' (v. 12: *οὐδ' ἔχει τι βέλτιον τούτου βίος*).

Not without reason, these two poems are written on the occasion of festive days. On these days, everybody exchanges gifts with each other. But Christophoros makes a sharp contrast between normal gifts and his exquisite gifts, for which only he and his friends have adequate taste. Christophoros supposes that knowledgeable people will understand the value of his intellectual gift: the refusal of other gifts, far from being impolite, indicates an etiquette that wilfully deviates from the practice of the common people.

This is also clear from poem 97 (also greatly damaged), which is a response to a gift of words from a friend. Christophoros says that he enjoyed the beauty of his words; he likens the words of his friend to the charmed girdle of Aphrodite (v. 3). Moreover, it is a gift shared by friends (v. 5: *ἡμῖν τοῖς φίλοις*).

Christophoros' gifts, such as they appear in his poems, are pre-eminently celebrations and confirmations of intellectual friendships. The 'gift of words' appears as a precious gift for exclusive tastes. It binds together a group of people who have the appropriate sophistication necessary to acquire this taste. Christophoros' gifts are thus markers, for poet and for recipient, of an exclusive shared intellectual culture.





## Conclusions

Maupous wished for himself that ‘a vestige of the light’ from his words would be preserved, far from the winds of the open air (92.68–71). Clearly, vestiges of his poetry have remained, but equally clearly, they are indeed being kept as a ‘lamp in a small corner’, as he himself foresaw. His poetry, as well as that of his contemporaries, is merely fodder for academicians, no *aes perennium* that still speaks to us through the ages. Nevertheless, I hope that the preceding chapters have demonstrated that these poems are not inconsequential fossils, not a futile corollary to the history of Greek literature. They are testimonies to a flourishing intellectual life, to some exceptional personal talents, and to a culture that, despite impressions to the contrary, could be playful and lively. By way of conclusion, I would like to offer some final thoughts; but rather than giving definite answers, it is perhaps better to formulate these thoughts by way of paradoxical oppositions.

### SELBSTZWECK AND SITZ IM LEBEN

Among the many useful concepts German philology has given us, two are particularly in opposition to each other: *Selbstzweck* (a goal on its own) and *Sitz im Leben* (a fixed place in ‘real’ life). The former refers to literature as an enclosed space, an irrelevant play upon forms; the latter refers to literature having a ritual or pragmatic place in contemporary society, fulfilling a ‘real’ need. The preceding chapters have oscillated back and forth between these two poles.

Many poems mainly fulfil a role within the enclosed world of the school. They were showcases, games meant to bedazzle, to impress. We only have to think of the utterly purposeless enterprise of squeezing

these verses into a pseudo-iambic prosodical mould. For certain hexametric poems of Christophoros (8 and 52), I have argued that they are little more than exercises in metre and diction. Reading and writing, one would infer, was a cerebral exercise by armchair scholars.

Yet, in apparent contrast to this, we have seen that poetry served real purposes in the immediate milieu of the poet and his audience. It accompanied gifts and foundations, applied for jobs, adorned public and private ritual occasions, addressed contemporary historical persons, and so forth. It was publicly performed and displayed, and enjoyed a circulation that was perhaps not broad, but nevertheless sought after.

This book suggests that the one proposition does not exclude the other. The fact that poems were used to display and demonstrate skills *has* to a certain extent a function in real life: it furthered the reputation of the intellectual and was thus part of his attempts to make promotion in the intellectual field, in turn tied to material rewards. Education was a sector of society where much was at stake, and in which competition was widespread. The rivalry between independent schools and teachers was an incessant driving force behind poetic production.

Moreover, contemporary readers encountered these poems in their *Sitz im Leben* and yet at the same time they did pay attention to their formal features. The *logios* was a teacher and intellectual, but he was at the same time an official closely associated with public speech and court ceremony, and was often called upon to provide inscriptions for buildings or objects. Every public speech or inscription was at the same time a proof of his abilities and a fulfilment of a real cultural, social, or ritual need.

#### EPHEMERAL OR ETERNAL?

At certain points, the previous chapters have downplayed the status that poetry enjoyed among the Byzantines. Poets did not work consciously in a poetic tradition, nor did they engage with other poets *qua* poets. There is no formulation of a 'poetics', nor is there a sustained meta-poetic discourse.

The lack of self-awareness of poetic work *qua* poetic work also forms the basis of the insecure status of a poem. A poem can change contexts easily, from stone to paper, and back. The initial circulation of poems is fugitive and ephemeral, dependent on scrolls and perhaps

oral transmission. Poets did not expect their poetry to circulate widely. Their texts were in the first instance intended to be read by a limited public: peers, colleagues, and direct rivals within an educational and intellectual milieu.

In many manuscripts, a poem is dissociated from its author because it is not attributed to the original author, as happened in particular with Christophoros' poems. It could be reused for other purposes and freely reworked, as with Psellos' didactic poems. A poem was not a fixed entity, but an ephemeral thing: there are as many texts as there are contexts.

Enter the *Vat. gr. 676*, the collected works of Mauropous, precisely in the shape in which he wanted his readers to see them. The whole book reflects the effort of an author to pass on his life's work to future generations. Upon opening it, the reader first encounters some poems relating to the book itself, in which the author anxiously ponders upon the afterlife of his works. And as a whole, Mauropous fully exploits the format of the codex as a medium through which to deliver his message. His collection is made to reflect his life and his legacy. To a lesser degree, Christophoros too consciously preserved and arranged his work, mentioning his name often and leaving something like a *sphragis* at the end of poem 114. Poets were dimly aware of the afterlife and immortal nature of their poetic products. In Psellos' imperial discourses, literature is said to bring eternal fame for emperors. In poem 4 of Michael Grammatikos, the verses are said to preserve the scandalous manners of the bishop of Philomelion 'for eternity'.

As I have tried to argue, the ephemeral nature of poetry (as devised for a single occasion) and its fugitive nature (being delivered orally or on scrolls delivered to the addressee) are not entirely lost when collected into a book. The author-collector painstakingly preserved the vestiges of the initial circumstances of the poems. Their occasional nature remains intact as much as possible. It is ephemerality captured as it is, and then copied to be preserved, ideally for eternity.

#### FRIVOLITY AND VALUE

Our poets voiced quite disparaging opinions about poetry as a subject in education. Psellos called it *πάνδημος*. Kekaumenos insisted that he did not have his work circulate as something 'poetic'. The remark of

‘Scylitzes Continuatus’ that Michael Doukas, under the influence of Psellos, occupied himself with attempts at poetry instead of defending the empire, is an extreme example of such a disparaging tone. There is something frivolous about poetry, which is also expressed by the references to play in the didactic poems of Psellos and Niketas.

On the other hand, poetry was also valuable and prestigious. Christophoros considers poems as pearls that should not be cast before swine (84). In manuscripts, book epigrams are often executed in golden uncials, unlike the prose texts surrounding them. Their visual and acoustic presentation carried an exquisite pleasure. Verse was the ideal form to constitute a gift of words or to accompany a gift; it was also a favoured form to express a petition to the emperor. Versified words were more intense, more valuable, also on a social level. Hence, there is a tension between disparagement and appreciation: poetry was not entirely taken seriously, but nevertheless appealed to a refined taste.

Political verse in particular was often described as a mere trifle, a playful game. There were implications to writing in this *ametron metron*, and Psellos was very conscious of them. It encompassed specific aesthetic principles (clarity and conciseness amongst them), but upon closer view, these are not so very different from the aesthetics of dodecasyllables. It entailed a different discourse of patronage, necessitated by the low standing of the metre. No doubt, it appealed more to popular (and imperial) tastes than the more learned metres. But it was by no means a strange or unknown world to Constantinopolitan intellectuals. Its place was ambiguous, but its appeal already at this time should not be underestimated.

#### SELF-ASSERTIVENESS AND SUBMISSIVENESS

It cannot be doubted that our poets were self-assertive about their work. Christophoros barred intruders from the blissful world of *hoi logoi*, where he himself belonged (40). Mauropous was indignant that someone had plagiarized his verses, and firmly claimed them as his own work (61). Our poets were on the alert for enemies, slanderers, ready to finish them off and boast about their own abilities. They themselves denounce the rapid and to a certain extent meritocratic system through which they themselves had once been propelled to an

enviable status. This self-assertiveness resulted from ambitions and competitions; it was part of a continuing struggle to uphold and defend personal reputations in the field of contemporary teachers and intellectuals.

This does not prevent some of the poems from being flattering, cajoling, and submissive, especially towards patrons. Mauropous wrote long-winded encomia for his imperial patrons, arguing that they had changed his life and provided unexpected protection (48, 54, and 55). Christophoros hailed the Paphlagonian family of Michael IV as the ideal imperial quartet (18), and provided a precious piece of praise for Monomachos (54). Psellos greeted Isaakios I Komnenos in some ebullient court poems (18 and 19). This is an element that has disturbed modern scholars, or one that they are all too inclined to overlook. We want literature to comment on society, to alter social relationships, and we like to see the poets we study as humanists, independent thinkers, subversive heroes.

I think they are none of these. Their poetry simply followed the logic of patronage. As members of the ruling class, or aspiring to become such, they had every interest in preserving the status quo. Our poets provided one-time services for patrons, and expected rewards in return; they were playing a game of tit-for-tat, and consciously advertised it as such. Social criticism was not something they aimed at. Their 'satiric' poetry was not really satiric in that it denounced vices of society at large. Instead, it was polemic, 'agonistic' poetry, aimed at rivals, defending their privileged position.

Explicit requests for patronage were only made by people occupying an inferior position in society. The discourse maintained by those at the top of the elite (Psellos and Mauropous in their successful years) aimed at a tacit support of intellectuals, guaranteed by the largesse of emperors, one of the central ideals that now comes to the fore. They could afford to emphasize the superior nature of their 'products' and the value of their artistry.

#### IS BYZANTINE POETRY POETIC?

In Chapter 2, 'Concepts', I defended an argument which, in its most extreme form, can be stated thus: Byzantine poetry is not poetry (it is a text in verse), and Byzantine poets are not poets (they are

intellectuals who happen to write some verse). By putting this so starkly, I wished to emphasize that if we analyse Byzantine poetry in the quest for something ‘poetic’, armed only with our own preconceptions about what a poet is or what poetry is, then we seriously undermine our chances of gaining an understanding of either. However, in the course of the chapters that followed, we came across many elements that did suggest that poetry was a special kind of communication. Poetry carried connotations and strove for qualities that were chiefly connected to verse and not to prose.

First, the idea of *iambikè*, the idea that mockery and satire are best expressed in iambs. Poets seem to have made a very conscious connection between form and content when they used dodecasyllables (‘iambs’) to ridicule people. Poetry certainly allowed for more irreverent and liberal expressions of sexuality, scatology, and aggressive abuse.<sup>1</sup> Christophoros’ poetry in particular contains piercing wit and keen realism, and, while remaining a typical product of the elite, his poetry explores possibilities that seem to have previously been barred from learned poetry.

Second, the idea of *poikilia*. In its sense of ‘embellishment’, *poikilia* manifests itself in all those instances where poetry literally embellished something else, as an inscription on an object, as an epigram in majuscules occupying an entire page; in sum, in all the examples where poetry embellishes a gift, enhancing its value. In its sense of ‘variation’, *poikilia* may stand for versatility and polyvalence, properties highly valued in this period. By sheer virtue of being unlike prose, poetry was valuable.

Third, the idea of *metron*. The double significance of the word (‘metre’, ‘moderation’) is no mere pun. It refers to the highly valued ideal of restraint, in words and in life. Mauropous exploits the idea to the full, but he had of course found it in the poetry of Gregory of Nazianzos. While we arguably do not possess a ‘poetics’ of Byzantine poetry, Gregory’s long poem *Eis τὰ ἔμμετρα* comes very close to being a foundation document for it. It advances the image of the ideal intellectual, caught between the needs of this world and the desire to devote himself wholly to spirituality, while developing the idea of *metron* as an ideal to live by. In this sense, poetry, as ‘measured,

<sup>1</sup> See also Magdalino, ‘Change’, 26–7.

moderated speech', may be a suitable form for expressing an autobiographical or apologetic message.

Fourth, the idea of *charis*, which is associated with grace, elegance, frivolity, indulgence, pleasure, gift, favour, etc. When Psellos, in his poetic treatment of urines, reflects on the purpose of his didactic poem (9.529–38), he singles out the *charis* of the metre. Elsewhere, *charis* and related notions are again connected to the metre (*metron*) or rhythm (*rhythmos*) of poems; and probably these terms refer to the accentual metre, the stress pattern that can be picked up by the Byzantine ear. If there is one thing we do not appreciate enough in Byzantine poetry, but which at the same time was an important criterion for Byzantines, it is the entrancing quality of acoustic regularity and melodiousness. The same applies to the visual experience of poetry on the page, and how this interacts with the acoustic experience. My brief overview in Chapter 3, 'Readings', based on some chance observations of manuscripts, can be nothing more than a beginning; more systematic work needs to be done in this area. The connection of *charis* with 'gift' is also important, since we see so often that poems accompany, or constitute, gifts that are valuable and precious.

Hence, poetry surely could bring aesthetic pleasure, as well as intellectual appreciation. It appealed to the mind as well as to the senses. Poetry was a powerful cultural medium, albeit far from poetic in the sense we mean it.





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